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Tests

CLOTHES DRYERS
STEAM CLEANERS
CHEAP DRILLS
CORDLESS PHONES
CLEANING MITTS

TRANS FAT

Hidden danger in food



GLAMOUR PHOTOS

How to get what you want

47 DIGITAL CAMERAS TESTED

COMING SOON ...

Strollers

Some three-wheel jogger strollers aren't as robust as you might expect.



Laundry detergent

Will there be any new top performers or Best Buys?



TV

51 cm sets on test.



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Food for thought

I don't know about you, but I'm starting to wonder if there's anything left in the world that I can safely eat. What with too much fat giving us heart disease, mercury in some fish, oils that are good for you one day and bad the next, anything processed being full of sugar or salt, and even those saviours chocolate and red wine only OK in small doses, sometimes it seems like I'll never enjoy a guilt-free meal again. Even fresh fruit and veg have the organic/non-organic question hanging over them.

That's nonsense, of course — we all know perfectly well that such a thing as a healthy balanced diet really is achievable, even with TV ads and peer pressure trying to convince our children it consists of fast food and sugary breakfast cereals. We also know that one of the ways to help us get a healthy diet is to read food labels so that we really know what we're eating.

So it doesn't help — and annoys me — when another ingredient that's potentially bad for my heart is discovered and there's generally no way I can tell whether it's in the food I'm buying. That's the position with trans fat in this country at the moment, and there's no excuse for it continuing to be left off our food labels. See page 9 for more on trans fat, what foods it's likely to be in and why we need to avoid it just as much as the saturated fat we know about.

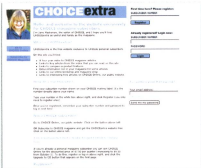
And until the labels tell us how much trans fat is in each of the processed foods we buy, I guess the only sensible thing is to stop buying any of them. Maybe that'd speed the food industry down the road of keeping us informed a bit faster.



Jane Mackenzie,
Editor

FOR MEMBERS ONLY

www.CHOICEextra.com.au



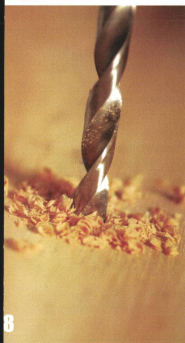
The free website exclusive to CHOICE magazine personal subscribers, with a four-year index and links to many articles online.

Look out for the  symbol in magazine articles — it indicates there's extra info on CHOICEextra. This month you'll find the test results for digital cameras costing \$800 and over, which we couldn't fit into CHOICE. To use this free website you'll need to log in with your subscriber number, which is the number directly above your name on the mailing label that comes with the magazine.



All you need is the model name and number you want to buy, the price you want to beat, and your CHOICE subscriber number (from the mailing label with the magazine). CHOICE Shopper is available to personal subscribers only.

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8



19



4

CONTENTS

April 2005

COVER STORY

9 Trans fat: hidden danger

It's got more heart-disease potential than even saturated fat, so how do you know which foods it's in?

Photo: Australphoto

REPORTS

12 Don't just shoot me!

How to make sure a glamour photo session fulfils your dreams rather than turning into a nightmare.

16 Hybrid petrol/electric cars

The Toyota Prius and Honda Civic Hybrid taken for a test drive.

32 Reader car reviews

Subscribers report on their experiences with four 4WDs and a people mover.

TESTS

19 Digital cameras update

Cheaper, smaller, lighter, faster — digital cameras get better and better.

24 Steam cleaners

High expectations, disappointing results.

28 Cheap cordless drills

Can you get a good job out of a drill costing less than \$50?

35 Cordless phones

They're starting to look and work more and more like mobiles.

38 Cleaning mitts

They mean changing the cleaning habits of a lifetime, but some trialists loved them.

41 Clothes dryers

They all do the job, but some do it faster and more energy efficiently.

REGULARS

4 CHOICE Cuts

7 Your Letters

8 Hip Pocket: Sydney even more expensive; illegal bank fees?

46 Computing CHOICE: Cheap phone calls with VoIP

47 Consumer Bookshelf

49 Recalls and bans

51 CHOICE index: May 2004 — April 2005

52 The Hard Word

Heater test

We're currently finalising a test of electric convection heaters. The test samples were sourced from distributors' warehouses in February, which means we were able to include new models, and we only picked models that'll still be widely available after publication.

The downside: we won't be able to publish the results in CHOICE until the June issue. However, they'll be available on CHOICE Online, and also free to CHOICE subscribers on CHOICEextra, by late April or early May.

In the past, we brought you test results for heaters early in the heating season — usually in April or May CHOICE. As heaters aren't available in retail outlets until about that time, and often don't even make it into distributors' warehouses until February, this was only possible because we bought our test samples at the end of the heating season the year before.

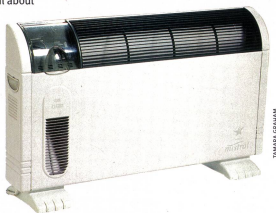
Of course we tried to make sure we only included models whose distributor claimed they'd be available in the next season. However, quite regularly models would be discontinued

after all, or there were only very few samples left in the new heating season, and the models sold out very quickly.

This wasn't an ideal situation for several reasons:

- We wasted money buying and testing models we couldn't report on.
- We recommended models that sold out quickly and left some of you frustrated.
- We missed out on models that were released for the new heating season.

For the new test results, go to www.choiceextra.com.au in late April or early May and click on 'convection heaters' in the index.



WHAT ARE WARRANTY CARDS WORTH?

Recently a consumer wrote to us complaining that the information they had to provide on a warranty card amounted to market research and they didn't want to supply it. Their question was: if they didn't fill this information in and send it back, would they still have a valid warranty on their product?

Based on the information we've received from a number of offices of fair trading and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission it's a very good question indeed, as no-one seemed able to give us a definitive answer.

What we can tell you is that whether you're provided with a voluntary written warranty or not (and manufacturer warranties are voluntary, not obligatory), you still have statutory (legal) warranty rights. This means, among other things, that goods have to be fit for the purpose for which they're sold, and if they break down after an unreasonably short period of time you're entitled to recompense, replacement or repair.

It also means that, if push came to shove, if a manufacturer or retailer tried to dishonour its voluntary warranty on the grounds you hadn't filled in its warranty card, a small claims tribunal would probably take a dim view of its actions. After all, if the company was prepared to voluntarily guarantee an item for a certain period of time, the statutory warranty rights would sensibly also apply for at least that same period.

Can you help?

TELL US YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH PROFESSIONAL PET CARE SERVICES

We'd like to hear about your experiences with care of your cat or dog in your absence, such as dog walking services; people who look after your pet in your home while you're away; people who look after your pet in their own home; or purpose-designed boarding facilities (kennels or catteries).

We'll use the information for an article containing useful tips and things to consider when choosing commercial pet-minding services. Please tell us about any noteworthy experiences (good or bad) you've had or any suggestions or pointers for other readers to keep in mind.

Things to think about include:

- Care and attention (food and water, grooming, playing, etc); exercise, health and medical matters (vet care arrangements, pets with special needs, etc).
- When the carer comes to your home, other issues might be security and other household matters, and reliability or trustworthiness of the carer.
- In external facilities, think about living quarters, environment and atmosphere (setting, cleanliness, space, vibe), staff or carer professionalism and friendliness, and the facility's accessibility (location, opening hours).

Please write to: Pet care, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or email petcare@choice.com.au — and please include daytime contact details in case we need further information. Closing date is April 29, 2005.

Thanks for your help.

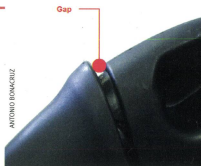


Stroller hazard

In November 2004, Joshua Reilly, 20 months, was out in his jogger stroller with his grandmother when he suddenly started crying. When she checked to see what was wrong she found his index finger bleeding from a deep 1 cm gash, and a loose flap of skin. No-one could work out how the accident had happened.

A couple of weeks later it happened again. "He's a tough little cookie, so when he cries you know something's wrong," says his mother, Karen. "And he was bawling." This time Karen was able to see what had happened. With her weight pushing down on the handlebar, the folding hinge on the side of the stroller had opened a gap big enough to trap the side of Josh's finger (see the photo, above). The injury wasn't as bad as the first time, but the side of Josh's finger was still cut. Karen stopped using the stroller.

She returned it to the manufacturer, **BABYLOVE**, for inspection. When we contacted them for comment they'd already checked it thoroughly. They hadn't been able to exactly



reproduce the gap Karen said she'd seen, but agreed that the gap they could see was still large enough to pinch the skin of a small child's finger.

Unfortunately the hinge mechanism on this stroller is a common design used by several manufacturers, so it's quite likely more strollers from various brands are affected — and the Australian standard for strollers doesn't require this hinge to be inspected. We've written to Standards Australia, asking for a test for this hazard to be included in the next version of the standard, and we'll be checking for it in future tests.

In the meantime, when buying a stroller, parents would be wise to check the folding



mechanism and look for models with a fabric cover or padding that covers the main side hinge. And **BABYLOVE** advises parents to check their stroller regularly for damage, particularly after the first 12 months' wear and tear, and not to use it until it's repaired if they find any damage.

Pins and needles

A study has found that acupuncture plus medications may produce better results in people with arthritis of the knee than medications alone, reports the January/February issue of *CHOICE Health Reader*.

Researchers in a pain management unit in Spain looked at the use of acupuncture in conjunction with conventional drug treatment of osteoarthritis — that is, with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Patients with osteoarthritis of the knee were split into two groups — one receiving acupuncture plus a common NSAID, the other receiving the NSAID with a placebo acupuncture treatment.

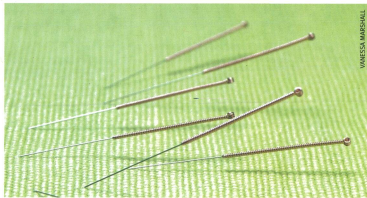
The progress of the groups was followed over two years, and parameters like pain, stiffness and quality of life measured. The researchers found that those on the genuine acupuncture plus NSAID treatment did better — both psychologically and physically — than the others. They've reported the findings in the *British Medical Journal*.

While acupuncture isn't considered by most GPs to be a front-line treatment for osteoarthritis of the knee, it may be worth a try if NSAIDs aren't helping. But more research is needed before the same can be said for treating osteoarthritis in other joints.

Also in Jan/Feb *Health Reader*:

- Researchers in the US have vindicated mothers everywhere by producing scientific evidence that gobbling food can cause indigestion.
- Exposure to air pollution caused by travelling in traffic has been linked, by German researchers, to an increased risk of heart attack — another argument for cleaner air, and avoiding the rush hour.

If you'd like to subscribe to *CHOICE Health Reader*, call 1800 069 552 toll-free, or go to www.choice.com.au/magazines.



CORRECTION

WASHER-DRYERS CHOICE, March 2005

In the table on page 25 we said the **ARISTON AL128D** Margherita 2000 only has a timer control for drying. In fact it has a sensor and a timer.

CompactFlash price survey

Save money on your digital storage media by shopping around. Our sister publication, *Computer CHOICE*, recently surveyed 57 retailers across Australia to find which stores offered the best prices for CompactFlash cards, one of the most common types of storage memory used in digital cameras.

Computer CHOICE looked at how much you can save on CompactFlash cards in 128, 256 and 512 MB capacities. The survey priced cards at online stores, specialty camera stores, computer stores, discount stores and department stores.

CompactFlash card prices are quite volatile and can change rapidly, depending on supply and demand for the products. This survey was conducted in December 2004 and although prices may change, the conclusion remains the same — it's important to shop around.

WHERE TO SAVE

■ Online retailers provided the best savings. Compared to the overall average price, you'll save about \$7 on 128 MB cards, \$13 on 256 MB and \$12 on 512 MB. Some online retailers offer free delivery, but generally you'll pay extra (normally about \$8–\$10). You can reduce this by buying multiple items at once, and you won't have to spend time and money travelling to a store. Always check the returns policy of online stores before you buy.

■ Specialty camera stores were more expensive than the overall average price across all capacities surveyed. You could pay between \$8 and \$13 more for cards, depending on their capacity.

■ Computer stores offered reasonable prices, with savings of about \$3 on 128 MB cards and almost \$3 on 512 MB cards, compared to the overall average price.

■ Discount and department store prices varied. Prices for 128 MB cards didn't differ greatly from the overall average price but 512 MB cards were far more expensive — almost \$19 more than the overall average price.

Average savings from overall average price

	128 MB	256 MB	512 MB
Online	\$7.41	\$13.21	\$12.14
Camera	-\$8.48	-\$13.18	-\$11.61
Computer	\$3.19	-\$0.18	\$2.82
Discount/dept	-\$0.30	-\$3.44	-\$18.91

A negative value indicates that you'll pay that much more than the overall average price for that capacity of card.



More juicy secrets

When we looked at the herbal supplements sold in juice bars we recommended that you don't waste your money on most of them — they don't contain enough of the medicinal herbs to be of any benefit (see *CHOICE*, December 2004). It's much the same story with the packaged juices with herbal supplements now available in major supermarkets.

We found a range of three such juices in Coles and Woolworths stores in Sydney:

■ **FRUITFUL SUPERJUICE Green Zone** says it has wheatgrass, barleygrass and spirulina: "One of the world's best sources of amino acids — good for both body and soul."

■ **FRUITFUL SUPERJUICE Kickstart** promises to "get you into first gear" because "we've added Guarana for a natural kick, Ginkgo to get you going and Ginseng to give your whole system a lift".

■ **FRUITFUL SUPERJUICE Immune** contains echinacea and boldly claims that, "This juice helps maintain a healthy immune system." This sounds like a health claim to us — something the Food Standards Code doesn't currently allow.

The claims are imaginative, to say the least. None of the herbs is added at more than 0.03%, unlikely to be enough to be of any benefit. The manufacturer told us the amounts are based on guidance from the supplier of the herbal supplements. However, you're likely to need at least 1 g per day of echinacea, for example,

to get any benefit, so you'd have to down three entire 1 L cartons of **FRUITFUL SUPERJUICE Immune** to come even close to this amount — and much the same applies to some of the other herbal supplements. (The guarana in **Kickstart** at least contains some caffeine, but with only 0.03% of it you probably won't feel much of a kick.)

In a way, though, it's fortunate that there's unlikely to be enough of the herbal supplements to have any effect, because most of them don't have enough evidence yet to show that taking them regularly is safe.

And to cap it all off, the jury's still out on whether many medicinal herbs have the health effects they're claimed to have at all, even if taken in sufficient quantities.

In *CHOICE*'s view, to protect consumers from potential health hazards and rip-offs, medicinal herbs shouldn't be permitted in foods without strict regulation. If they are permitted, they should only be allowed at levels that are safe and effective (in itself a problem, since for many of them no-one knows what these levels are), and there should be clear warnings to alert people to potential risks and side effects.



yourletters

I want to see it working!

I'm in the market for a new mobile phone. That should be easy; they're sold in nearly every second retail outlet. But I must be a real rarity. I want to see the display screen of the model that I intend to buy, not after but *before* I buy it.

I don't want to see another brand X model, which the salesperson thinks has the same display. I don't want to look at a picture in the user manual, assuming the store is willing to open the box to find one.

I want to turn the phone on to check out the size and contrast of the text, the numbers and the various icons showing messages, battery life, signal strength, etc. I'd love to be able to read these without having to scuddle around for my glasses every time I want to use the phone. With some phones (other people's) I can do this easily and I want one for myself, but the model I found that way is no longer available.

Also, the menu system varies markedly between brands and models, despite the vague assurances from sales staff that "this is the best one". For them, maybe, but my usage could be quite different from theirs.

Sure, there are so many models that "we can't have them all active" sounds like a good excuse, but I won't spend \$100 on a jacket without trying it on, or a CD player without hearing it



play, so why am I expected to do so with a mobile phone?

Judy Eicke, Gooseberry Hill, WA

We fully agree and hope Judy has meanwhile found a phone she could check out in the shop. The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association, which represents the mobile phone industry in Australia, told us they've agreed to your policy.

■ *Have a 'try before you buy' policy, which allows customers to operate the mobile handset and check its features before they buy.*

■ *Mightn't have, in some shops, every particular model available for demonstration at a particular time, but most of the 'hot' models are available for demonstration.*

■ *Would in most cases take a model out of the box if it wasn't on display and show the customer the live unit if requested.*

So if you can't properly check out the phone you want in one shop, try another. AMTA members include Telstra, Optus, Vodafone, Hutchison, Nokia, Motorola, Samsung, Panasonic, NEC, Siemens, Sony Ericsson and Ericsson.

What weight the bangle?

When I recently shopped for a gold bangle, I was astounded at the many choices I had to make and the confusion about how to compare values.

A gold bangle clearly isn't just a gold bangle. I found that bangles may be hollow, silver-filled, copper-filled or solid 9 ct gold. They come in widths from about 4 mm to 9 mm, and in various styles: flat, half-round or round (called golf).

Having settled on a 6 mm wide, half-round, solid 9 ct gold bangle, I then found there were huge price discrepancies between shops.

How could I compare prices easily? One retailer told me the price variations were partly due to huge mark-ups by some retailers, but they also related to the overall weight of the bangle.

As soon as I realised this, making comparisons was relatively easy. When asking about it, I found that some retailers actually had the bangle's weight printed on the price tag, but others had to bring out the scales.

Could I suggest that all

THUMBS UP!



■ Beverly Wilkinson, who sent us the letter on the left, gives

a thumbs-up to **LEONARD'S WHOLESALE DIAMOND & GOLD** of Newcastle, which helped her make sense of the price variations for gold bangles.

■ Cathy McDonald of Old Beach, Tasmania, awards a thumbs-up to **BIC Australia**, which promptly repaired her 10-year-old Sheaffer pencil and sent replacement leads, all free of charge. "I thought it was important that such a superior level of customer service didn't go unnoticed."

jewellers, where appropriate, display the weight of the items they sell on the price tag? Or would that be too transparent?

Beverly Wilkinson, Lakelands, NSW

Displaying the weight of a gold item would certainly make price comparisons easier for customers when buying similar, comparable items such as bracelets or bangles. The Jewellers Association of Australia (JAA) confirmed that only carats have to be declared, and that jewellers usually also indicate whether it's solid or hollow gold. It pointed out, though, that apart from the weight of a piece of jewellery (and the amount of gold in it), its aesthetic quality, labour and craftsmanship also determine its price.

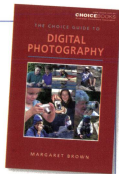
If you're looking for hints on buying and looking after jewellery, the JAA website (www.jaa.com.au) has various brochures you can download on gold, diamonds, pearls and gemstones. If you aren't online, ask the JAA on 1800 657 762 for the nearest JAA jeweller who could give you a brochure.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

We want to hear from you — your experiences help our research and often let other readers know about scams and rip-offs. Positive outcomes you've had to a complaint you took to a manufacturer, retailer, importer or tradesperson interest us, too. Address these letters to *Thumbs Up* at the address on page 2.

To thank you for writing to us, *Your Letters* awards a prize of a CHOICE book to the 'Letter of the month'. This month's winner, Judy Eicke of Gooseberry Hill, WA, receives *The CHOICE Guide to Digital Photography*, or any other book of her choice from Consumer Bookshelf, pages 47–48.

We're sorry we don't have the resources to answer all your letters personally, and in the magazine we may edit them or print only an extract. See page 2 for how to reach us.



INSURANCE OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

Insurance Enquiries and Complaints Limited (IEC) has changed its name to the Insurance Ombudsman Service Limited (IOS), but the scheme's procedures are unchanged. The CEO of IEC, Sam Parrino, is now the ombudsman.

IOS can assist with enquiries about general insurance (which includes motor vehicle and household insurance) and help to resolve complaints against general insurance companies.

The ombudsman service can make binding determinations up to claim amounts of \$150,000 and recommend settlements for amounts up to \$290,000.

Contact the IOS on 1300 780 808 or go to www.insuranceombudsman.com.au.

For most life insurance enquiries contact the Financial Industry Complaints Service: 1300 780 808 or www.fics.asn.au.



SYDNEY GETS (EVEN) MORE EXPENSIVE

Sydney is the world's 20th most expensive city, having jumped from 67th place in just one year, according to the Mercer Human Resource Consulting *Cost of Living Survey 2004*. Other Australian cities featuring in the top 100 are Melbourne (67th) and Brisbane (87th).

According to the report, the relative cost of living in both Australia and New Zealand increased more than in all other countries surveyed, due to the significant appreciation of our currencies against the US dollar. However, quality of life here continues to rate highly.

Four of the 10 costliest cities are in Asia, with Tokyo the most expensive city globally and Osaka, Hong Kong and Seoul not far behind. London (second place) is Europe's dearest, while New York is in 12th place.

WANT MORE MONEY INFO?

CHOICE *Money & Rights* magazine is published six times a year and contains more information on money topics (and your consumer rights) than we could ever fit into CHOICE. To subscribe call 1800 069 552 toll-free or go to www.choice.com.au/magazines.



Penalty fees may be illegal

A recent study by the Consumer Law Centre Victoria suggests that some penalties charged on bank accounts and credit cards may be illegal.

A range of penalty fees is charged on your different accounts. These include overdrawn fees for going over your credit card limit or putting your transaction account into overdraft; dishonour fees for failing to have sufficient funds in your account to cover a cheque or direct debit payment; and various late payment fees.

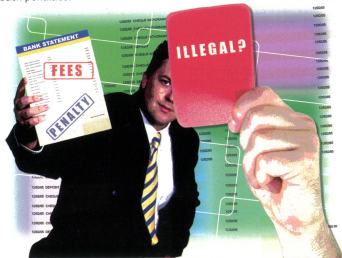
Our major banks all have similar policies about how and when dishonour and overdrawn penalties are charged to transaction accounts. Such penalties are charged at the bank's discretion and may be waived in some circumstances, but they'll probably be charged whether or not the bank lets the transaction go through. Even if the bank dishonours the transaction, its penalty may still put your account in the red. To add insult to injury, the bank may then charge you an overdrawn penalty.

These fees are big business to the banks. According to the Reserve Bank, in 2002 the 19 banks that account for over 90% of the banking sector in Australia made \$789 million of 'other' fee income, including penalty fees.

According to the Consumer Law Centre Victoria, in Australian contract law it's true that parties may agree that should either of them breach or dishonour the terms of the contract, the 'innocent' party may recover the costs of that breach or default. However, while they may seek compensation, they can't impose a 'penalty' for a breach or default.

Yet this is exactly what banks do every time they charge a fee for an overdrawn account or late payment. And even the lowest fees are many times more than the actual cost to the bank of the late payment or overdrawn account.

CHOICE will definitely be supporting the Consumer Law Centre's efforts to take action against banks on behalf of consumers who are charged such penalties.



Hidden DANGER

The trans fat hidden in many processed foods is even worse for your heart than the saturated fat you know about.

Did you eat a meat pie for lunch today? Maybe you had a croissant or a caramel slice for morning tea? And perhaps something for dinner made from pre-prepared pastry? All these products could be loaded with trans fat, which is bad for your heart — but you wouldn't know because the manufacturers don't have to tell you.

Experts worldwide are becoming increasingly concerned about the health impact of the trans fat found in many processed foods (see *Real fears*, page 10). Weight for weight, it's probably worse for you than the saturated fat that we all know to avoid (and which manufacturers have to disclose on the label).

The risk is sometimes brushed aside by health authorities on the grounds that we eat a lot less trans fat than saturated fat. But the US National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine has suggested that the only safe level of trans fat is zero and that we should eat as little as possible consistent with a healthy, balanced diet.

In Australia we know very little about the amount of trans fat in the foods we eat. So CHOICE tested more than 50 processed foods to provide some reliable information from which to assess the level of risk. About a third of them contained trans fat at levels well above what's considered safe by many experts (see *What we found*, page 11).

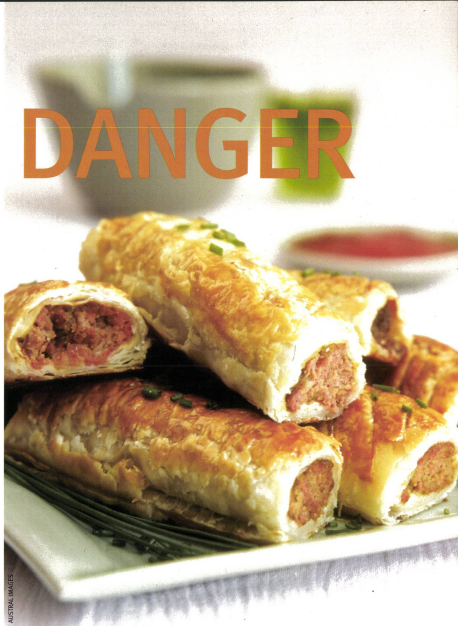
WHAT IS TRANS FAT?

Trans fat is found mainly in deep-fried fast foods and processed foods made with margarine or shortening. It's created by a process called hydrogenation that's used by food manufacturers to improve the stability of vegetable oils and to convert liquid oils into solid fats to get the right consistency in foods such as cakes and pastries. Products made

with these fats also have a longer shelf life than if made with unhydrogenated oils.

Another source of trans fat is margarine-type spreads, although spreads now have a lot less trans fat in them than in the past (see CHOICE, Jan/Feb 2005). Advances in food technology have made it possible for manufacturers to produce them without depending so much on hydrogenation. Nonetheless, nearly half the butter-substitute spreads you'll find in supermarkets and healthfood stores have levels of trans fat that are considered by some experts to be unacceptably high.

Trans fat is also created naturally by micro-organisms in the rumen (or forestomach) of cows and sheep. These bugs partially hydrogenate the fats and oils from the animals' feed — so beef, lamb and dairy foods also contain small amounts of trans fat. A European study found that, on average, almost two thirds (64%) of the trans fat that people there ate was from artificial hydrogenation, the rest from natural sources.



AUSTRIAN IMAGES

IN A NUTSHELL

■ When CHOICE tested 55 foods we found plenty with levels of trans fat high enough to significantly increase your risk of heart disease if you eat them regularly (see *Trans spotting*, page 10).

■ Even though trans fat is bad for you, you currently can't usually tell how much of it there is in a food from the label. CHOICE wants it to be mandatory for food manufacturers to list the amount of trans fat on the label.



MASTERFILE

Fast food

If you looked at just the saturated fat, some of the fast foods we tested wouldn't seem too bad (see the table, below). But when you include the trans fat the picture changes. A **HUNGRY JACK'S Whopper and Fries** has more than twice as much trans as saturated fat, while the two **McDONALD'S** meals have about half as much, but more saturated fat overall. Both of these ratios give the food artery-blocking potential, but the nutrition information supplied by the fast-food chains doesn't tell you this.

And in the fast food we tested, where trans fat is low (less than 2% of total fat), saturated fat is high — there's not a nutritional winner in sight. (However, **McDONALD'S** tells us it's looking at ways of reducing levels of trans fat.)

FAST FOOD

In order of highest to lowest trans fat

HUNGRY JACK'S Whopper and Regular Fries	22.5	7.8	69.6	16.7
McDONALD'S McNuggets (six pieces) and Medium Fries	7.5	13.7	78.2	17.9
McDONALD'S Big Mac and Medium Fries	7.3	15.7	76.6	14.5
KFC Crispy Strips and Fries	1.1	48.2	50.2	10.9
KFC Burger and Fries	0.8	40.8	57.9	9.6

1 Types of fat as % of total fat

This shows the breakdown of saturated, trans and other fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated) that together make up the total fat content of the food. (The numbers don't add up to exactly 100% because of rounding.) Any of these fast foods whose trans fat content is more than 2% of the

1 Types of fat as % of total fat

Trans fat (%)	Saturated fat (%)	Other fats (%)	Overall fat content of food (%)
22.5	7.8	69.6	16.7
7.5	13.7	78.2	17.9
7.3	15.7	76.6	14.5
1.1	48.2	50.2	10.9
0.8	40.8	57.9	9.6

total fat wouldn't be allowed on sale in Denmark. On the other hand, of the fast foods we looked at, those that are lower in trans fat are higher in saturated.

We analysed the fat from one of each of the fast foods bought from outlets in Sydney.

REAL FEARS

The evidence against trans fat is considered so strong that Denmark has banned the sale of food products in which trans fat is more than 2% of the total fat content. And from the beginning of next year most food labels in the USA will be required to show the level of trans fat.

Much of the evidence comes from studies that have been carried out involving thousands of people, looking for links between lifestyle and health outcomes. Consistently it turns out that the more trans fat people eat, the more likely they'll end up with heart disease. And some of these studies have found that trans fat increases the risk of heart disease by more than eating foods containing the same amount of saturated fat does.

Other experiments, in which smaller numbers of people were given carefully controlled diets, have shown that trans fat increases the level of bad LDL cholesterol in much the same way as saturated fat. And worse, trans fat often seems to lower the concentration of good HDL cholesterol that's protective against heart disease.

There's also some evidence that trans fat may increase the risk of type 2 diabetes and promote allergies in children — but at this stage the evidence isn't strong enough to confirm the connection.

WHAT'S ON THE LABEL?

You might have seen trans fat mentioned on food labels. A few products (often those that contain little or none) include trans fat with the more familiar saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats in their nutrient composition panel.

Trans spotting

We picked processed foods from the supermarket shelves that would be likely to contain trans fat, as well as some fast foods from the major chains that were also potential candidates. It isn't a comprehensive list or a systematic brand comparison, just a representative selection of what's on the market. But it reveals a number of foods — and suggests that there'll be many others — that contain trans fat at levels that might increase your risk of heart disease if you eat them regularly.

Of the 55 foods we analysed, 18 wouldn't be permitted in Denmark because trans fat is more than 2% of their total fat. They're listed below from highest to lowest percentage of trans fat:

HUNGRY JACK'S Whopper and Regular Fries.
MANNA Pastry From Heaven Oyster Cases.

But Australian manufacturers aren't required to include trans fat unless they make a claim about cholesterol or unsaturated fats. If they make no claim, they need only give the levels of total and saturated fat in the nutrition information panel. So foods can contain trans fat in addition to their saturated fat and you wouldn't know.

Foods imported from the UK (and other EC countries) often say on the label if they're made using 'partially hydrogenated' vegetable oils — look for this in their ingredients lists. It's at least an indication that the product contains some trans fat, though you still won't know how much.

WHAT WE FOUND

The CHOICE food team checked out the big supermarkets for products that were likely to have been made using partially hydrogenated vegetable oils and at the same time would contribute significant amounts of fat to our diet (foods such as pies, cakes, biscuits and confectionery). We also bought some deep-fried fast foods from Hungry Jack's, KFC and McDonald's. We took these foods back to the lab and measured the percentages of total fat, saturated fat and trans fat.

All up, we tested 55 foods. Of these, we found 18 that wouldn't be permitted in Denmark because trans fat makes up more than 2% of their total fat (see *Trans spotting*, below, for a list of the foods).

There's no real need for the food industry to use these fats. There are plenty of margarine-type spreads that have no trans fat at all, or only very little. And our tests showed some big differences between the levels of trans fat in comparable products of different brands. In HERBERT ADAMS Traditional Pasties, for example, 13%

of the fat is trans, whereas in PATTIES Mini Party Pies it's less than 1%; a HUNGRY JACK'S Whopper and Regular Fries has 23% trans fat, while a serve of KFC Crispy Strips and Fries has only 1%. If some manufacturers can reduce their dependence on trans fat, so can they all.

HOW TO AVOID TRANS FAT

Until manufacturers are required to tell you the level of trans fat on the label, your best chances of minimising the amount you eat are to:

- Avoid deep-fried fast foods and take-aways.
- Avoid manufactured biscuits, cakes and pies.
- Choose a spread for your toast and sandwiches that's low in saturated and trans fats (see CHOICE, Jan/Feb 2005).

Not all brands of these products necessarily have unacceptably high levels of trans fat, but unless it's on the label you can't tell. And remember to still watch out for the saturated fat that is on the label. While it seems to be true that, weight for weight, trans fat is worse for your heart, it's also true that we're likely to eat a lot more saturated fat, so try to avoid the double whammy.

THE CHOICE VERDICT

Our survey shows that many foods contain trans fat at levels high enough to increase your risk of heart disease if you eat them regularly, but you have no means of knowing this. CHOICE wants manufacturers to be required to include the amount of trans fat as well as saturated fat on the label. Trans fat offers no nutritional benefits and consumers should be given the option of avoiding it if they want to. ■

HOW MUCH UNHEALTHY FAT DO I EAT?

To find out how much saturated and trans fat you eat, do our Fat quiz on www.choiceextra.com.au.



HERBERT ADAMS Traditional Pasties.
ERICA'S KITCHEN Vol au Vents.
PAMPAS Shortcrust Pastry.
McDONALD'S McNuggets (six pieces) and Medium Fries.
McDONALD'S Big Mac and Medium Fries.
SARGENTS Party Sausage Rolls.
HOME BRAND Croissants.
FOUR 'N TWENTY Traditional Meat Pie.
SARA LEE Snack Quiche Lorraine.
NUTELLA Hazelnut Spread.
RITZ Cheese Crackers.
COLES SAVINGS Croissants.
BALFOURS Giant Sausage Roll.
BURNS & RICKER Bagel Crisps.
WOOLWORTHS Fresh Caramel Slice.
PODS With Snickers.



Don't just shoot me!

Want more than just a photo?

Here's how to get a good one.

IN A NUTSHELL

- Do some research to find a photographer you're comfortable with and whose work you like.
- Make sure you know from the start how much you'll have to pay, and what you get for your money.
- Read contracts very carefully and make sure you know what you're agreeing to before you sign. It's quite common to end up signing away your copyright on the photos, for example, meaning you have no rights over them being reproduced.

We asked CHOICE readers to tell us about their experiences with glamour photography, and received a range of replies with experiences ranging from positive to negative extremes. Whether you've been bitten by the glamour bug or simply want a great family photo for posterity, our tips on what to look for and readers' real-life stories provide ammo for a great shoot.

HOW MUCH???

A professional photography session can be expensive, with total costs (including prints) in the hundreds of dollars. Ask about all costs upfront, especially the price of prints and any conditions on what you can buy.

"I wasn't permitted to buy any normal-sized prints unless I bought a framed, enlarged portrait ... and even with the cheapest framing, one portrait cost over \$400." Annette, Willaston, SA.

Some photographers in our readers' stories offered a free sitting, in the hope that their customers would be prepared to pay hundreds of dollars for a single photo. Others charged somewhere up to \$100 for the sitting and make-up session, possibly including a single (usually small) photo to take home. Additional photos then cost extra.

Quite a few of our readers were taken by surprise when the time came to order photos. For example, Tracey had a glamour makeover photography session that was advertised at a marked-down price of \$59. However, it wasn't until she went to see the photos that she was told about the cost of prints, with one unframed photo costing well over \$50. *"The most embarrassing bit was that the photos were to be a present for my boyfriend, but because of the high price, I had to get him to pay for them."* Tracey, Wollongong, NSW.

If you want the negatives or digital files as well as some prints, you need to ask about it at the start of your negotiations and may well be disappointed. It's common practice for professional photographers to hang onto them either for a certain amount of time or indefinitely, rather than give them to you. That

means if you want prints done at some point later on, you have to order them from the studio — at far greater cost than you'd pay at the local photo lab.

Keeping the negatives or digital files doesn't automatically mean the photographer owns the copyright and has the right to reproduce the photos, but you need to check the contract very carefully if you don't want to sign your copyright away — see *Copyright and your rights*, page 14, for more.

Photographers justify their prices on the basis that it takes a lot of talent, experience and skill, not to mention some expense, to produce a good-quality image.

For some customers, it's a lot of money well spent: *"All up I paid \$1800, and I still think I got the deal of a lifetime."* Margaret, Tamworth, NSW. But for others, it's a complete waste: *"The photos were very expensive and came to \$391, which seemed about the cheapest way out. They're in the chest at the end of my bed, and I haven't shown them to anyone."* Lynn, Albury, NSW.

HIGH-PRESSURE SALES TACTICS

After the high costs involved, one of the main complaints our readers made was of high-pressure sales tactics. Unfortunately there's not much you can do about this except to choose a photographer who's a member of the Australian Institute of Professional Photography (AIPP — see *Professional ethics*, page 15,





TAMARA CERAMAK

for more about the institute). Its members undertake not to use high-pressure tactics, and you can complain to the AIPP if they do.

"The photos were even worse than I imagined they'd be. I didn't want to buy any, and that's when things turned nasty. In the end I had four people yelling at me about the effort and expense they'd gone to. I left without buying any, and they continued to phone me, and send nasty letters." Mel, Wagga Wagga, NSW.

"No hard sell took place during the photo session, but when I visited the studio to view the proofs, lots of cajoling and coercion took place, and I ended up paying around \$400 for a huge (yuk!) portrait of myself." Jo'Anna, Quorn, SA.

GLAMOROUS OR GARISH?

"My make-up made me look like a hooker, and my hair looked like I'd been through a rough bout of chemo. I work in law enforcement and brought my uniform along so I could get a nice shot for my mum, but the final photos made me look like a stripper turning up to a buck's night!" Belinda, Melbourne.

"It's not that they weren't professional, but I thought the whole thing was supposed to make me feel special and be a bit of fun." Katherine, Albany, WA.

"We had several hours of hair and make-up done, and it was a lot of fun, especially for my teenage daughters." Evelyn, Sydney.

If you believe the ads, a glamour makeover session involves pampering and indulgence, and makes you look and feel like a movie star or supermodel.

Some of our readers tell a different story. Overly heavy make-up, make-up done by unqualified staff (even the photographer himself in one case), being rushed through like a school photo shoot, amateur hair styling, a dusty old changing room with nowhere to hang clothes, and lots of people wandering through the studio during a 'sensitive' photography session.

At the other extreme, we had people who were indeed made to feel special and had a marvellous time. They were consulted about the sort of look they wanted, had the whole process explained to them and had a fun, relaxing experience — and great photos to show for it.

You can increase your chances of having a good time by checking out the studio beforehand and meeting the photographer and other staff — see *How to get what you want*, page 15.

REAL OR IDEAL YOU?

Think about what you want from the session: some glamour photographers offer complete makeovers, while others try to capture the real you. Our readers had different opinions on what was best:

"You want to look like a movie star, not yourself!" Catriona, Ballarat, Victoria.

A NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE

Jacqueline of Macquarie Fields, NSW, was talked into signing up for a package that included prints and the negatives for \$495, effectively giving her all rights to the finished product. She was told that if she didn't buy the negatives, the studio would have the right to do with them as they wished. Jacqueline decided on the package deal partly because she'd be able to get enlargements done elsewhere for a lot less than the studio was charging.

When she returned two weeks later to pick it all up, they told her they'd lost the film, and offered another photo shoot. But when she came back to pick up the second lot, the first film had also miraculously turned up again, and she was told she'd have to pay an additional \$495 to secure both sets of negatives and prints. She'd had some lingerie shots done, and they warned her that she might not like how they'd be used.

Due to financial constraints, Jacqueline bought only one of the sets. The great irony was that when she tried to get some enlargements done later, the lab to which she took them said the film was so underexposed that the only way to get decent images would be to scan the original prints.



"Being a woman of size, I wanted to be treated honestly but sympathetically. In other words, I wanted it to look like me — but not too like me! The photographer did this — there wasn't a double chin in sight." Cathy, Canberra.

"I was taken into a darkened room and the first of the photos was shown as a projected slide. It took me a full minute to realise it was meant to be a photo of me! I left without ordering any photos." Judith, East Brisbane, Queensland.

"My sister and I had some photos done and at Christmas we gave our mother a framed picture of the two of us, and I also gave my husband one of me. The pair of them sat looking at each other, like 'whoopie, they've given us both photo frames'. Finally we had to point out to them that it was US in the pictures! 'But you don't have blonde hair,' was my mother's reaction to my sister, and I had to point out 'The blonde one is ME!'." Janet, Roma, Queensland.

COPYRIGHT AND YOUR RIGHTS

According to copyright law, you (the client) own the copyright of photos commissioned for 'domestic purposes' (including family portraits, wedding photos and glamour photos), unless you and the photographer agree otherwise. In fact most photographers will get you to sign a contract assigning copyright to them, although it might not be apparent that this is what you're doing.

If you own the copyright:

- The photographer isn't allowed to use the negatives or digital files without your consent, even for their personal portfolio.
- As noted earlier, it's common practice for photographers to keep the negatives or digital files, so owning the copyright (the exclusive right to make reproductions from them) may be of little use in practice if you don't have access to the originals. This situation can come about because ownership of the negatives (as opposed to the rights to reproduction) falls under general property law, not copyright law.

If the photographer owns the copyright:

- In theory, your image might end up in an international photo library and be used in ads to promote anything from tooth whitener to genital herpes medication. If you've had lingerie or nude shots, well ...
- In practice, it's likely they may want to reproduce photos for self-promotion purposes, including advertising and entering competitions. The AIPP recommends its members include a clause in a contract spelling this out. However, it points out that if the photos are of a 'sensitive' nature, you can protect your dignity and privacy by deleting the clause.

It's vital to read any contract carefully, ask questions about anything you're not sure about, and consider the consequences of what you're agreeing to. As the

AIPP points out, a contract sets out the terms of an agreement, and it's malleable: you can make changes to it before signing it, and it's up to the photographer whether they accept them or not. If they don't, try elsewhere.

HOW TO GET WHAT YOU WANT

■ Treat a photo session like any other major purchase — shop around, not only for a good price, but for a photographer who offers the product you want as well as the conditions you want regarding copyright, ownership of the negatives or digital files, etc.

■ Have a look at the type of photography offered to see if it's what you want. Meet and talk to the photographer to see whether you're comfortable with them. As Phil Kuruvita, President of the AIPP, says, "The interpersonal relationship between photographer and subject goes a long way to creating good photos. If you're not relaxed and comfortable, you won't get as good results."

■ For glamour photos in particular, look at a photographer's albums of before and after shots. This should not only help you communicate to the photographer the kind of photos you like, but also tells you something about how closely — or not, if you prefer — the 'afters' reflect the real person. Some photographers offer 'slimming' and other touch-ups, if that's the effect you're after.

■ Be very clear from the start about how much you'll have to pay and what you get for it. How much does the sitting cost? Does that include styling? A complimentary photo? How much do the final prints cost, and what size are they? Are there any conditions attached, such as having to buy a print of a certain size or a framed print before you can buy any others? Do you have to buy them if you don't like them? Are payment plans offered?

■ Do you supply your own clothes and jewellery, and do your own hair and make-up? Or do they? Are the stylists suitably qualified? What's the atmosphere of the studio like — ask to take a look at it. ■



FABULOUS PHOTOS

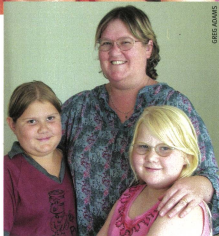
Ellen, Emma-Jade and Belynda of Adelaide were very happy with the family portrait photography they commissioned last year.

"The studio staff took us through what would happen during the session and the viewing, explained the prices and so on. They gave the girls a little extra make-up and did their hair. The whole procedure was very easy-going, and the photographer was great with the girls. I knew the photos would be expensive, but if they were good, I was definitely going to buy them.

"Two weeks later I went back for the viewing, which took one and a half hours. There was no hard sell — the only stipulation was that I had to decide that day whether or not I wanted them, and not ask for more time.

"The photos looked fabulous, and for \$1400 I bought a framed wall-mount collage of five photos, an 11 x 14 portrait and a mini-album of 30-odd 6 x 4 photos.

"It's not something I'd do very often, but I was very happy with the results and the company's professionalism."



Professional ethics

Professional photographers are eligible to join the Australian Institute of Professional Photography (AIPP), provided they meet entry criteria (which cover experience and quality of work) and agree to a binding code of ethics. The institute encourages further education and development of skills, and has about 1400 members throughout Australia.

The code of ethics includes obligations to not use high-pressure sales tactics; to be upfront and honest about the products and services on offer and to avoid using innuendo or concealing information such that consumers may be misled; and to highlight any issues relating to copyright in the contract.

The AIPP also offers a complaints resolution process if you have a complaint that isn't covered by regular consumer (or Trade Practices) law. However, it only handles complaints related to its members.

Phil Kuruvita, President of the AIPP, offered the following advice: "Portraiture is an expensive, luxury item, and people need to give it the weight of consideration they would for any other purchase of that magnitude. To some extent, it's a case of you get what you pay for."

For more information about the AIPP, including a directory of members, details about its code of ethics and how to lodge a complaint, see its website: www.aipp.com.au.

FUEL SIPPERS

Fed up with high petrol prices?

A hybrid car might be just the answer.



IN A NUTSHELL

■ The two hybrid cars available in Australia are easy to drive and use much less fuel than comparable non-hybrids. They're expensive, though, so you'll have to drive them for many years before you recover the difference.

The marketers of hybrid cars must be pinching themselves. They launch fuel-efficient cars onto the Australian market, and hey presto, petrol prices skyrocket. It's no surprise to hear hybrid cars are selling better than expected.

The chance to stretch out the distance between visits to the petrol pump has a lot of appeal. However, you'll generally pay a lot more for a hybrid vehicle than for a comparable conventional model, and it'll be many years till you recover that extra expense through the petrol you save. But hybrid cars have other benefits: they conserve petrol resources

and emit much less air pollution and greenhouse gases.

We test-drove the two hybrid models currently available in Australia — the **TOYOTA Prius** and **HONDA Civic Hybrid** — and found there's a lot to like and very little not to like about these high-tech cars.

WHAT'S A HYBRID?

In simple terms, it's a combination of an efficient petrol motor with an electric motor. In the **HONDA**, the electric motor helps the petrol motor keep fuel consumption down, while the **TOYOTA** can run on the electric motor alone if the car is moving slowly. Both systems use the electric and petrol motors together when more power is needed.

In both cars, the electric motor is powered by a battery. Whenever you brake, the electric motor converts to a generator and tops up the battery.

The **TOYOTA** system turns off the petrol engine when decelerating and in some light throttle conditions. The power-assisted brakes, power steering, air conditioning and other electrical systems continue to operate as normal. **HONDA** keeps the engine running on long downhill stretches, but only on one cylinder.

Both cars turn off the petrol engine when you stop at the lights (if it's not off already with the **TOYOTA**, and only if the air conditioning is off in the **HONDA**), but as soon as you put your foot on the accelerator the car springs to life and off you go.

FUEL ECONOMY

In tests carried out for the Australian Green Vehicle Guide, the fuel consumption in the standard combined city/highway test cycle for the **Prius** was just 4.4 L/100 km, for the **Civic** 5.2 L/100 km.

Size-wise (not engine-wise; the point of hybrids is that they have smaller petrol engines), **TOYOTA** compares the **Prius** to its **Camry**, the automatic 2.4 L version of which uses 9.8 L/100 km. The closest non-hybrid **HONDA Civic** is the automatic GLi sedan, which uses 7.5 L/100 km.

Petrol is not (yet) quite expensive enough to make a hybrid the accountant's vehicle of choice. At \$1/L of petrol, and based on travelling 15,000

km/year and the above consumption figures, it'll take more than nine years to gain back the difference in purchase prices between the base **Prius** and the **Camry**, and over 17 years for the **HONDAs**. At \$2/L, it would drop to about 4.5 and 8.5 years.

It's worth noting, though, that for all cars the standard test cycle often gives numbers that are hard to match in the real world. In real life you can probably expect the consumption to be a litre or so higher — which is also what we saw on the fuel economy computers fitted to both cars. Drivers can monitor economy as they go, and take up the challenge of equalling the published numbers — for example, by not accelerating too hard.

EMISSIONS

The **HONDA** is classified as an Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) in the United States, while the **TOYOTA** goes one better, achieving Super Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (SULEV) status. There's only zero emissions below these classifications. Both are far better than current Australian emissions standards.

Both emit less greenhouse gas than standard petrol cars. The main greenhouse gas from cars is carbon dioxide, which is directly related to the amount of fuel used. An Australian study that included the **Prius** and some experimental hybrids estimated a 66% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions compared to the average Australian family car.

The Green Vehicle Guide rates the **Prius** at 8.5 (out of 10) for greenhouse emissions, and the **Civic Hybrid** at 8. As a comparison, the non-hybrid **Civic** rates 7, the **Camry** 5.5.

DRIVING IMPRESSIONS

The **Prius** can take a little getting used to. It can be a bit disconcerting when you stop at a red light and the petrol engine turns off. It's even more eerie when you put your foot down and the car moves forward but the engine doesn't immediately turn on, or in slow-moving traffic when you glide silently forward for a considerable distance with the engine off.

But once you're used to these quirks, driving the **Prius** is scarcely different from driving any other modern automatic hatchback.

TOYOTA's designers have given the **Prius** a few space-age tricks to go with its futuristic appearance. Instead of a key, you start it by inserting a remote control into a slot on the dash and pressing a power button.

If it's cold or the battery's low, the petrol engine will start. But if it's warm and the battery is well charged, nothing happens until you select 'Drive'.



It'll then glide forward on electrical power and even accelerate up to 45 km/h or so before it decides it needs the petrol engine.

There's a video screen on the dash that shows you what's happening, where the power is coming from and going to, and if the battery is being recharged. It's perhaps a little distracting, but fascinating at the same time.

HONDA takes a more subtle approach. The **Civic** has a normal key that starts the petrol engine every time. If you step out of a normal **Civic** into the hybrid, the only clue is a display on the dash just above the fuel gauge that tells you if the electric motor is assisting the petrol engine or recharging the battery. Below that is an indicator for battery charge status.

But, as with the **Prius**, stop at the lights and the engine switches off. Put your foot on the gas when the lights go green and off it goes. Going downhill

	Honda Civic Hybrid	Toyota Prius
Body style	4-door sedan	5-door hatch
Petrol engine capacity (L)	1.3	1.5
Petrol engine power (kW)	69	57
ENVIRONMENT		
Fuel consumption (L / 100 km)	5.2	4.4
Greenhouse rating	8	8.5
SAFETY AND SECURITY		
Airbags	Driver, passenger, side	Driver, passenger
ABS	✓	✓
Immobiliser	✓	✓
Crash test rating	★★★★ (A)	★★★★ (B)
PRICE	\$29,990	\$36,500 (C)

(A) US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration rating. Not comparable to ANCAP or Euro NCAP ratings.

(B) EuroNCAP/ANCAP rating.

(C) Base model. Also available with the i-Tech options pack (\$8100), which includes smart entry and start, GPS system, side and curtain airbags, vehicle stability control, six-disc CD changer and Bluetooth telephone controls on the steering wheel.



and when braking, there's a slight change in the engine noise: it's only running on one cylinder, and the electric motor has switched to generating mode to charge the battery.

The **HONDA** rides better, and isn't as sensitive to bumps and roughness in the road surface. Some of this is probably due to tyre choice: the **Civic** uses normal tyres, while the **Prius** has special energy-saving low-profile tyres.

ARE THEY RELIABLE?

HONDA and **TOYOTA** have always featured at the top of our car reliability tables.

Both use some existing and proven components in their hybrids. For example, the engines in both cars have been sourced from other models, with some modifications to improve efficiency in a hybrid application.

Both manufacturers have several years' experience with hybrids. This is the second-generation **Prius**, while **HONDA**'s first attempt was the **Insight** two-seater.

Both makers offer eight-year warranties on their nickel-metal-hydrate batteries (with a kilometre limit).

We don't think either manufacturer would have released this type of car on the market if they expected it would affect their very good brand reliability record, but the bottom line is that we won't know for certain about reliability until enough of both cars have been on the road for long enough to show a trend.

WHICH IS BEST?

That's probably going to depend on your personal taste. Part of the choice might simply rest on whether you want a sedan (**Civic**) or hatchback (**Prius**). And if price is an issue the **Civic** is around \$6500 cheaper, though the **Prius** is more fuel-efficient (even with its slightly larger engine), especially around town.

If you're nervous about computer technology and would rather have a fairly conventional car without the space-age bits, the **HONDA Civic Hybrid** is just right. But if technology's your game and you like your car to look futuristic, the **TOYOTA Prius** fits perfectly.

We think either is a perfectly acceptable alternative to a car powered by fossil fuels alone. ■

Modified from an article that first appeared in the November 2004 issue of Consumer, published by our New Zealand sister organisation, the Consumers' Institute.

CHEAPER, SMALLER, LIGHTER, FASTER

No need to pay the earth
for a good digital camera.

IN A NUTSHELL

■ Even in the under \$800 price range you have a wide choice of good digital cameras with a variety of sizes and features.

There are now hundreds of digital cameras on the market, but our research suggests most people thinking about buying one are looking at prices around \$800 or less, so for this update we've picked the best performers from that range.

As you can see from the *What to buy* list, you don't have to pay top dollar to get a good performer, but the more expensive models do have some useful features (see note 9, page 21).

WHAT TO BUY

OLYMPUS C-770 ULTRA ZOOM	\$749
CANON POWERSHOT S1 IS	\$749
OLYMPUS C-760 ULTRA ZOOM	\$499
CANON POWERSHOT A75	BEST BUY \$399

If small and light are your main criteria, the CANON Digital IXUS 500 (\$799, top right) and CANON Digital IXUS 40 (\$699, bottom right) are good cameras, though neither can quite match the four listed above for overall performance. However, the Digital IXUS 500 comes close.



PHOTOS: SHARON KAYAR

Profiles

Models in the *What to buy* list are profiled in rank order within groups. Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in January 2005.



OLYMPUS C-770 ULTRA ZOOM

Price: \$749

A four-megapixel camera with a long 10x optical zoom (38–380 mm), a very accurate LCD viewfinder and good image quality — but its battery life is considerably shorter than the four CANONS in the *What to buy* list. It has a relatively large monitor and can print direct from the camera via PictBridge (see page 21).



CANON POWERSHOT S1 IS

Price: \$749

An easy-to-use and very versatile three-megapixel camera with a very good flash and excellent battery life. Its overall image quality isn't quite as good as some of the others in the same price range. However, it can print direct from the camera via PictBridge and its monitor can be rotated to avoid glare.



OLYMPUS C-760 ULTRA ZOOM

Price: \$499

A three-megapixel camera with a long 10x optical zoom (42–420 mm). This zoom isn't as wide-angle as the more expensive C-770's, so it's more suited to outdoor use. Its battery life is considerably shorter than the four CANONS in the *What to buy* list, and movie quality isn't the best. It has a relatively large monitor and can print direct from the camera via PictBridge.



CANON POWERSHOT A75

Price: \$399 **BEST BUY**

A reasonably versatile three-megapixel camera, and at this price a bit of a bargain, with a good range of features. Its image quality is similar to the Powershot S1 IS, it has a relatively large monitor and can print direct from the camera via PictBridge.

IF YOU WANT A SMALL AND LIGHT CAMERA:



CANON DIGITAL IXUS 500

Price: \$799

The Digital IXUS 500 is a five-megapixel camera in a very small package — if a little expensive. It has good battery life and a good score for flash photos.



CANON DIGITAL IXUS 40

Price: \$699

The Digital IXUS 40 has good image quality, especially in manual mode, and also has good battery life.

ALSO TESTED

The following cameras under \$800 were also included in the tests, but got an overall score of less than 60%. For space reasons we've left them out of the table on page 22. You can find the full scores for them plus cameras costing \$800 and over that were also tested on www.choiceextra.com.au.

- CASIO Exilim EX-S100 (see the photo, above right).
- KYOCERA Finecam SL300R.
- OLYMPUS μ-mini Digital.
- PENTAX Optio X.
- CANON Powershot A400.
- SANYO Xacti Digital Movie VPC-C4GX.
- KONICA MINOLTA Dimage X31.
- KODAK Easyshare CX7300.
- KODAK Easyshare CX7330.

The smallest camera in this test was the Casio Exilim EX-S100 (\$599), a three-megapixel camera weighing only 128 grams — about the same as five AA batteries. It's not very versatile (see note 4, below), even though it has a zoom lens, and is relatively expensive for its performance level, but it's a highly transportable point-and-shoot fashion accessory and comes with a dock for recharging and image transfer. It only scored 59% overall, so it's not included in the table overleaf (see Also tested, below left).



PHOTOS: SHARMA GRAHAM

PICBRIDGE

Picbridge is a relatively new way for digital cameras and inkjet printers to communicate. The printer and camera don't have to be of the same brand, but the camera must be PicBridge-compatible and the connection between them via a USB cable. Once connected, the camera can control the basic printer functions so you can print without needing a computer.

1 Overall score

This is a combination of the following scores:

- Image quality (auto and manual are equal): 30%
- Ease of use: 25%
- Versatility: 12%
- Viewfinder/monitor: 12%
- Battery life: 10%
- Flash: 8%
- Movie quality: 3%

2 Image quality scores

This is an evaluation of the camera's resolution (sharpness), colour reproduction, vignetting (loss of brightness at the photo's edges), distortion (curving straight lines) and focusing (speed and accuracy). We took a number of images with each camera in both fully automatic and manual mode.

3 Ease of use score

A five-person evaluation of each camera's instruction manual, viewfinder, monitor, data transfer and shutter delay, plus inserting and removing its memory card and changing its settings, controls and batteries.

4 Versatility score

An evaluation of the camera's lens, memory, light sensitivity adjustment (based on the ISO 100/200, etc., standard), ability to deal with different lighting situations (white balance), shutter speeds, exposure options, viewfinder/monitor size and adjustment, image deletion, flash type and red-eye reduction, focus (closest and manual), battery options and performance, audio and video connections, image stabilisation, continuous shooting, tripod socket, shutter delay, and the time it takes for the camera to be ready to take a photo.

5 Viewfinder/monitor score

A measure of the difference between the height and width displayed in the viewfinder/monitor and what is recorded on the final image, and an appraisal of the image quality for both.

6 Battery life score

A measure of how many photos you're likely to be able to take with freshly charged or new batteries. Cameras with a score of 100% managed over 250 of the following cycles before the first 'battery low' warning: turn on in record mode, zoom full range and back, take photo, image viewed for five seconds in playback mode then deleted, camera set to record mode and the cycle begins again.

7 Flash score

Tested at one, three and five metres to check the exposure is even across the image.

8 Movie quality score

Cameras that are able to record video were used to make four 'highest-quality' movies, and were then scored on resolution of detail, fluency of playback, picture noise and pixelation caused by compression.

9 Features

■ **Video out:** A connection that allows you to look at your pictures or movies on TV. This is a handy way to show your pictures to a group and makes your digital camera a highly portable display device as well as a camera.

■ **Manual aperture/shutter:** Aperture controls the depth of field in your picture, allowing you to determine which parts of the image are in or out of focus. Setting the shutter speed manually is handy if you're taking photos of fast-moving objects or to compensate for low lighting.

■ **Continuous manual focusing:** All the cameras in this test have autofocus, but manual focus is useful for situations where the automated function isn't up to it. Low light and subjects behind glass or with little contrast can be tricky for some systems.

Continuous manual focus is more useful than systems that only allow a number of preset distances, as it allows for more precise control.

■ **Manual white balance:** Light comes in many colours — fluorescent is usually greenish, tungsten (normal household bulbs) is red/orange and daylight is blue to red, depending on the time of

day. Automatic white balance should make sure whites always appear white regardless of the lighting conditions, but sometimes you'll get a better result if you can manually override the automatic setting.

10 Zoom range

Equivalent to a 35 mm camera. Optical zoom only is shown in the table, as opposed to digital zoom, which crops images (reducing the number of pixels) and always results in reduced image quality.

11 Viewfinder type

- Optical.
- LCD: Liquid crystal display.
- None: The camera has no viewfinder.

Most of the cameras in this test have an optical viewfinder as well as an LCD monitor on the back of the camera. Some also have an LCD screen inside the viewfinder, which is usually quite accurate. Others don't have a viewfinder at all, so you have to rely on the LCD monitor to see what you're taking.

12 Shutter delay

This is how long it takes from when the shutter button was pressed until the shutter opened to take the picture.

13 Supplied memory (MB)/type

- CF: Compact Flash.
- xD: xD card.
- MM: Multimedia card.
- MS: Memory stick.
- SD: Secure Digital card.

14 Batteries

Digital cameras are power-hungry, so look for one that uses rechargeable batteries (Ni-MH or Li-Ion in the table). Many cameras that come with non-rechargeable AA batteries can also use rechargeables, so check when you buy. However, if you're caught short of power and don't have time to recharge, it's also useful to be able to use non-rechargeable alkalines — see footnote (B). CR-V3 batteries are non-rechargeable lithium ion, the same size as 2 AA batteries.

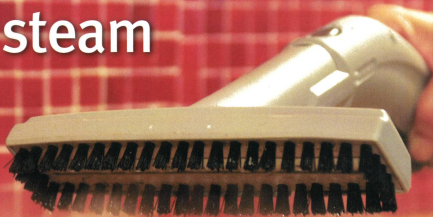
PERFORMANCE

Brand / model (in rank order)	1 Overall score (%)	2 Automatic image quality score (%)	2 Manual image quality score (%)	3 Ease of use score (%)	4 Versatility score (%)	5 Viewfinder / monitor score (%)	6 Battery life score (%)	7 Flash score
OLYMPUS C-770 Ultra Zoom	77	75	72	74	75	93	65	85
CANON PowerShot S1 IS	76	60	61	76	91	79	100	82
OLYMPUS C-760 Ultra Zoom	74	72	68	77	65	91	71	75
CANON PowerShot A75	73	62	61	75	77	65	100	85
CANON Powershot A85	73	61	63	73	79	62	100	86
OLYMPUS C-765 Ultra Zoom	73	67	68	70	74	84	77	76
CANON Digital IXUS 500	72	65	65	73	60	68	100	86
OLYMPUS C-60 Zoom	72	69	66	71	63	74	93	83
SONY Cybershot DSC-W1	72	62	67	81	71	65	100	57
CANON Digital IXUS 40	71	64	70	70	71	66	100	55
KONICA MINOLTA Dimage Z3	71	59	64	78	82	72	83	60
NIKON Coolpix 3700	71	75	74	73	54	55	100	65
NIKON Coolpix 5200	71	61	66	77	65	58	100	66
SANYO Xacti VPC-J4EXBK	71	66	64	77	67	63	99	57
FUJIFILM FinePix S5500	70	60	63	68	67	63	100	79
PANASONIC Lumix DMC-FZ3	70	62	65	67	72	65	100	69
RICOH Caplio GX	70	62	60	76	84	58	99	48
CASIO Exilim Pro EX-P600	69	61	65	78	66	57	94	62
KODAK EasyShare DX 6490 Zoom	69	67	64	57	46	83	100	92
CASIO QV-R51	68	63	61	76	50	69	100	55
HP Photosmart R707	68	66	67	71	47	68	98	56
KODAK EasyShare DX7630	68	65	60	67	53	67	100	74
SONY Cybershot DSC-P100	68	63	67	81	59	58	81	57
RICOH Caplio R1	67	61	57	74	73	51	100	55
FUJIFILM FinePix F810	66	64	65	66	66	58	80	59
KODAK EasyShare DX 7440	66	52	51	67	56	73	97	76
SONY Cybershot DSC-P43	66	57	61	81	60	57	69	62
FUJIFILM FinePix E500	65	59	65	68	57	59	100	55
NIKON Coolpix 4100	65	69	69	72	60	57	62	57
OLYMPUS D-590 Zoom	65	65	62	62	48	63	100	69
OLYMPUS Stylus µ410 Digital	65	67	65	60	52	62	100	63
PANASONIC Lumix DMC-LC70	65	60	62	70	56	56	68	86
SAMSUNG Digimax V50	65	63	67	52	73	60	100	55
SONY Cybershot DSC-P73	65	58	62	79	62	58	70	51
KONICA MINOLTA Dimage X50	64	71	69	68	61	61	57	57
SANYO Xacti VPC-S4EX	64	66	66	62	46	53	100	63
CASIO Exilim EX-Z55	63	56	63	68	51	56	100	49
FUJIFILM FinePix F450	63	63	70	67	41	63	81	49
KODAK EasyShare LS743 Zoom	63	57	59	70	45	56	93	61
OLYMPUS Stylus µ300 Digital	63	66	64	59	37	56	100	78
OLYMPUS AZ-1	62	63	62	69	41	82	45	63
SAMSUNG Digimax V4	62	71	70	64	56	59	37	66
CASIO QV-R61	61	57	64	68	48	62	72	55
FUJIFILM FinePix S3500	61	58	64	65	31	45	100	74
PANASONIC Lumix DMC-FX2	61	60	66	61	49	65	65	57
SAMSUNG Digimax U-CA 3	61	66	63	63	47	59	81	39
SAMSUNG Digimax U-CA 4	61	69	70	64	47	58	58	48

9 FEATURES					SPECIFICATIONS								
Video quality re (%)	Video out	Manual aperture / shutter	Continuous manual focusing	Manual white balance	Resolution (effective megapixels)	10 Zoom range (mm)	11 Viewfinder type	12 Shutter delay (sec)	13 Supplied memory (MB) / type	14 Number / type of batteries	Size (W x H x D, cm)*	Weight (g)**	Price (\$†)
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	4.0	38-380	LCD	0.89	128 / xD	1 x Li-Ion	11.5 x 6.5 x 7.5	361	749
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	3.2	38-380	LCD	0.6	32 / CF1, 2	4 x AA	11.5 x 8 x 7.5	499	749
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	3.2	42-420	LCD	0.6	16 / xD	1 x Li-Ion	11.5 x 6.5 x 8	343	499
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	3.2	35-105	Optical	0.7	32 / CF1	4 x AA	10.5 x 7 x 5	304	399
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	4.0	35-105	Optical	0.82	32 / CF1	4 x AA	10.5 x 7 x 5	318	499
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	4.0	38-380	LCD	1.12	16 / xD	1 x Li-Ion	11.5 x 6.5 x 7.5	342	599
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	5.0	36-108	Optical	0.8	32 / CF1	1 x Li-Ion	6 x 6.5 x 3.5	227	799
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	6.1	38-114	Optical	0.57	32 / xD	1 x Li-Ion	10.5 x 6 x 4.5	236	599
✓	✓	✓/✓	-/-	✓	5.1	38-114	Optical	0.04	32 / MS	2 x AA Ni-MH (B)	9.5 x 6.5 x 4	250	699
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	3.9	35-105	Optical	0.4	26 / SD	1 x Li-Ion	9 x 6 x 2.3	152	699
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	4.0	35-420	LCD	0.24	16 / xD	4 x AA	11 x 8.5 x 9	469	799
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	3.2	35-105	Optical	0.5	16 / SD	1 x Li-Ion	10 x 5.5 x 3.5	166	549
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	5.1	38-114	Optical	0.76	12 / SD (A)	1 x Li-Ion	9.5 x 6.5 x 4	182	699
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.0	37-104	Optical	0.5	16 / SD, xD	1 x Li-Ion	11 x 5 x 3.5	148	599
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	3.9	37-370	LCD	0.6	16 / xD	4 x AA	11.5 x 8 x 10.5	451	599
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	3.0	35-420	LCD	0.6	16 / SD	1 x Li-Ion	12 x 7 x 9.5	353	769
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	5.1	28-85	Optical	0	16 / SD (A)	1 x Li-Ion	12 x 6.5 x 4.5	264	599
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	6.0	33-132	Optical	0.4	9.2 / SD	1 x Li-Ion	10.5 x 7 x 4.5	262	799
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	4.0	38-380	LCD	1.1	16 / SD, MM	1 x Li-Ion	10.5 x 8 x 9	405	599
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	5.0	39-117	Optical	0.6	10 / SD	2 x AA Ni-MH (B)	9.5 x 6.5 x 3.5	230	499
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	5.1	39-117	Optical	0.46	27 / SD (A)	1 x Li-Ion	10 x 6 x 3.5	210	599
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	6.1	39-117	Optical	0.9	32 / SD	1 x Li-Ion	10.5 x 7 x 5.5	271	649
✓	✓	✓/✓	-/-	✓	5.1	38-114	Optical	0.12	32 / MS	1 x Li-Ion	11 x 5.5 x 3	185	749
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.0	28-135	Optical	0.1	12 / SD (A)	2 x AA	10.5 x 5.5 x 3	200	649
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	6.1	32.5-130	Optical	0.7	16 / xD	1 x Li-Ion	11.5 x 6 x 3.5	224	799
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	4.0	33-132	Optical	0.13	32 / SD (A)	1 x Li-Ion	10.5 x 7 x 5.5	253	499
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.1	33	Optical	0.09	16 / MS	2 x AA Ni-MH (B)	10 x 5.5 x 4	199	399
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	4.0	28-91	Optical	0.4	16 / xD	2 x AA	10.5 x 7 x 5	229	429
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.0	35-105	Optical	0.37	14 / SD (A)	2 x AA Ni-MH (B)	9 x 7 x 4	196	539
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	3.9	35-105	None	0.6	32 / xD	1 x Li-Ion	10.5 x 6 x 4	196	449
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.0	35-105	Optical	1.4	32 / xD	1 x Li-Ion	10.5 x 6 x 4	196	499
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.0	35-105	Optical	1.0	16 / SD	2 x AA Ni-MH (B)	9.5 x 6.5 x 5	217	549
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	5.0	38-114	Optical	1.36	32 / SD, MS	1 x Li-Ion	11 x 6 x 4.5	481	799
✓	✓	✓/✓	-/-	✓	4.1	39-117	Optical	0.12	16 / MS	2 x AA Ni-MH (B)	12 x 6 x 4	239	449
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	5.0	37-105	Optical	0.66	16 / SD	1 x Li-Ion	9 x 6.5 x 3	146	599
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.0	37-105	Optical	1.14	16 / SD (A)	2 x AA	9.5 x 6.5 x 4	193	299
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.9	35-105	Optical	0.3	10 / SD (A)	1 x Li-Ion	9.5 x 6 x 2.5	160	749
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	5.2	38-130	Optical	0.52	16 / xD	1 x Li-Ion	8 x 6.5 x 3	167	699
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.0	36-100	Optical	0.22	16 / SD (A)	1 x Li-Ion	11 x 5.5 x 3.5	184	499
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	3.2	35-105	Optical	0.9	16 / xD	1 x Li-Ion	10.5 x 6 x 4	197	399
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	3.2	38-114	None	0.58	16 / xD	1 x Li-Ion	10 x 7 x 2.5	201	399
✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	4.0	38-114	Optical	1.1	32 / SD	1 x CR-V3	11 x 5.5 x 4	224	599
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	5.9	39-117	Optical	0.5	10 / SD (A)	2 x AA Ni-MH (B)	9.5 x 6.5 x 3.5	227	599
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	3.9	39-234	LCD	0.5	16 / xD	4 x AA	11 x 8 x 9	390	429
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.0	35-105	None	1.0	16 / SD	1 x Li-Ion	10 x 5.5 x 2.7	146	659
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	3.2	38-114	Optical	1.2	32 / MS	1 x Li-Ion	11 x 5.5 x 3.5	157	399
✓	✓	-/-	-/-	✓	4.1	35-105	Optical	0.69	32 / MS	1 x Li-Ion	10.5 x 5.5 x 3.5	157	499

* Size includes all protruding parts when the camera is switched off. (A) Camera has internal memory; you can add a card of the type specified for extra memory.
 ** Including the battery, memory card and neck strap where applicable.
 † Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in January 2005. (B) Can also use non-rechargeable alkaline batteries.

Letting off steam



Steam cleaners help you work up a sweat, but they don't manage quite such a workout in the cleaning department.

IN A NUTSHELL

- None of the steam cleaners tested handled all our household cleaning tasks well.
- They're often an inconvenient way to clean, leaving mess behind that you have to clean up afterwards. They can also be time-consuming to use, and can be dangerous if not used correctly.
- Even if you want to avoid chemicals there are options that are cheaper and perhaps better — see our report on microfibre mitts, page 38, for example.

Switch the TV on during the day and chances are you'll catch an infomercial for a steam cleaner. These products claim to "sterilise" your home and clean any number of things, including tiles, grout, glass, mirrors, hard floors, cooking appliances, carpet and upholstery — some even claim to kill weeds and strip wallpaper.

With prices ranging from \$150 for a vacuum cleaner-sized model up to a mind-boggling \$2500 for similar-looking products, it's important to know what you're getting for your dollar. Rather than simply believe the glowing testimonials, we tried some of them out ourselves.

HOW THEY WORK

Steam cleaners have a water container with a heater inside. This heats the water up to boiling point so that steam is produced and released under pressure in a steady flow down a hose. The steam can then be applied to clean different surfaces through a variety of nozzle attachments — a floor tool, hand brush or jet nozzle, for example (see the photo, far right).

There are essentially three types of steam cleaner:

- Handheld 'gun', for treating small areas (the smallest and cheapest option).
- Full-sized model — that looks much like a barrel

vacuum cleaner — which can be used on larger areas and has a wider range of uses.

- Full-sized model with a built-in vacuum cleaner, which can be used on its own or in conjunction with the steam. These tend to be the more expensive models.

Our technical staff tested the second type — products without the benefit of suction — as a compromise between versatility and affordability. The models on trial were the cheapest in each brand on the market, up to \$800.

HOW WELL DO THEY WORK?

Overall, our testers were unimpressed with the steam cleaners on test.

- **Floor tiles:** While they all do a good job cleaning tiled floors, they leave behind balls of dirt that you have to wipe up as you go along, as there's no suction to remove them.

- **Glass:** Most clean glass very well, but the **SHARK** and the **STEAM DREAM** don't have provision for turning the steam supply off instantly, so while working on one area with the squeegee (a tool supplied with all of them), the steam continues to fog up areas just cleaned. In response to our comments, **SHARK** advised us that to avoid this problem you could turn off the steam switch just before finishing the job.

■ **Grout:** The ELECTROLUX and MYJEN did an OK job of rejuvenating grout to a lighter colour. But the nylon jet nozzle brushes of most other models flattened quickly during testing (see the photo, page 27), making them less effective and giving poor results.

While our scores are based on performance using the tools supplied as standard with the cleaners, it's worth pointing out that optional tools — available for some appliances at an additional cost — may do a better job than the standard tools. The KÄRCHER's 'optional extra' wire brush, for example, gave much better grout cleaning results when we tried it out, and optional wire brushes are also available for the EUROGEM and MYJEN. But a wire brush doesn't guarantee a better result — the SHARK's performance on grout was still mediocre using the one it comes with.

■ **Shower scum:** While some of the steam cleaners managed to do a reasonable job cleaning showers with a medium build-up of soap scum, they were all virtually useless on more heavily built-up soap scum. It didn't help that the poor-quality brushes on several models

became flattened early on in the test.

■ **Hotplates:** In the process of cleaning dirty hotplates, the steam cleaners blow grease particles all over the hob and the splashback, creating a mess that has to be cleaned up constantly with a towel. EUROGEM recommends placing a cloth in front of the jet of steam, to catch grime and prevent it from blowing everywhere, but we think that's a potential burn hazard.

Chemical-free, but...

If you need to avoid household chemicals or you're trying to cut back on the amount of chemicals you use and wash down the drain, steam cleaners would seem like the ideal solution — but non-suction models like these don't do all jobs well.

When it comes to cleaning a shower screen with a heavy build-up of soap scum, the steam cleaners on test just don't have the ability to tackle the task effectively. And although the steam cleaners did remove grease particles well from the cooktops, it was a messy and time-consuming task. In our testers' experience, chemical household cleaners give as good or better results — mess-free.

If using chemicals for cleaning just isn't an option but steam cleaning doesn't have you convinced, see our report on microfibre mitts, page 38.

IF YOU STILL WANT TO BUY ONE...

The results in general are disappointing, so we can't recommend any models unreservedly. And while we would have suggested trying the KÄRCHER at this lower (non-suction) end of the market, the model we tested is soon to be discontinued and you may no longer be able to buy it. But if you're sure you'd find a steam cleaner useful, we can offer the following advice:

■ All the steam cleaners in this test are very similar in their operation, but there are some differences in the standard accessories supplied. For a list of the tools we think are most useful, see *What to look for*, page 26.

■ Where companies offer a home demonstration or a DVD demonstrating how to use the cleaner, we'd recommend you take up this offer. We found that, generally, the user manual supplied with the steam cleaners wasn't always clear and comprehensive — information about when and how best to use the various attachments in particular could be greatly improved.



Some of the nozzle attachments and tools the cleaners can come with, such as (left to right) a jet nozzle and brush, floor brush, squeegee and hand brush.

This is what these non-suction steam cleaners generally look like — quite similar to a vacuum cleaner.



TEST: Steam cleaners

	PERFORMANCE					FEATURES						
Brand / model (in rank order)	1 Overall score (%)	2 Cleaning score (%)	3 Ease of use score (%)	Heat-up time (min)	Time in use (min)	Floor tool	Hand brush	Jet nozzle	Steam ready indicator	4 'Steam on' lock switch	5 'Steam off' lock switch	'W' lig
KÄRCHER K 1102 Vaporapid (A)	65	60	75	7	27	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
MYJEN SC 2000 Sapphire (B)	63	62	65	15	51	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
ELECTROLUX Z370C Enviro Multi Steamer (B)	59	58	61	8	26	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
EUROGEM TR5 (C)	58	58	57	9.5	37	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
SHARK EP95 Steam Blaster	56	52	66 (E)	0.5	14	✓		✓	✓	✓ (F)	✓ (F)	
PIRANHA Deluxe Mega Steamer MS-312	55	50	67	6	25	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
STEAM DREAM EK8005 (D)	48	47	51	3.5	12	✓		✓		✓ (G)	✓ (G)	

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO USE THEM?

■ **Ease of use:** Our testers found the steam cleaners inconvenient to use, and especially unwieldy in small bathrooms or enclosed areas like shower cubicles. Steam surrounds you as you clean, making it a hot and uncomfortable environment to be in.

■ **Filling with water:** A major frustration is that all but one of the steam cleaners (the SHARK) have water tanks that are under pressure. This means if you run out of steam before you've finished cleaning and need to fill up the tank again, you have to switch the machine off and allow it to cool down first, before removing the cap very slowly to avoid burning yourself when pressurised steam is released. You then have to let the tank cool down further before refilling with water.

The SHARK uses a pump rather than steam pressure to force steam down the hose, so you can top the water up at any time. Unfortunately this one very good feature wasn't enough to make up for its generally mediocre performance.

■ **Operating time:** The MYJEN took an irritatingly long 15 minutes to heat up to operating temperature, while the two quickest ones, SHARK and STEAM DREAM, needed only 30 seconds and 3.5 minutes respectively. On the other hand, the MYJEN produced steam for longer (51 minutes vs the STEAM DREAM's 12) — so it seems you'll either get frustrated waiting for these cleaners to heat up or because they run out of steam too fast. (But at least when the SHARK runs out of steam you can refill it immediately.) The other four models took between six and 10 minutes to heat up and lasted around half an hour. (See *What to look for*, right.)

■ **Safety:** Steam cleaners can be dangerous if not used correctly, so kids and pets should be kept away when they're in use.

OUR VERDICT

These non-suction steam cleaners are just an additional piece of cleaning equipment fighting with the vacuum cleaner for space in the cupboard — we won't be rushing out to buy one.



What to look for

If you're convinced a steam cleaner's for you, look for the following features to get the best available at this end of the market.

- **Controls:** Instant steam on/off control with the trigger on the wand rather than the machine.
- **Tools:** A good range, including floor brush, hand brush and jet nozzle brush. Check to see if extra tool options (such as a metal brush for grout) are available.
- **Long reach** from the power point.
- **A low weight and compact design** are preferable — especially as it'll be fighting with your vacuum cleaner for space in the cupboard.
- **Ideally you'd want a short heat-up time and a long time in use**, but with the tested models at least, the two seem incompatible. Maybe a compromise is to settle for average times for both (six to 10 minutes to heat up and around half an hour in use in this test). This information isn't always available, but you may find it in the product instructions, or by asking the salesperson in the shop.

SPECIFICATIONS

Reach (m)*	Weight (kg)**	Warranty (years)	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	6 Price (\$)†
7.2	4.3	1	Germany	Lifestyle Appliances (A)	499
7.6	9.9	3	Italy	Austeam Appliances	699
10.7	6.3	2	Italy	Electrolux	369
7.8	10.4	2 / 1 (H)	Italy	Eurogem Australia (C)	800
6.6	4.5	2	China	Specialised Sales and Marketing	190
8.0	5.5	2	China	Funtastic	149
6.0	4.7	1	China	Danoz Direct (D)	199

* The distance measured from the power point to the tip of the floor tool, including the two wands.

** Includes the weight of the cleaner filled with water, the wands and the floor tool.

† Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers/distributors in January/February 2005 or for our market survey in October 2004.

(A) Can only be purchased direct from the distributor. It's to be discontinued soon and replaced with a new model range. For more information call 1300 732 060.

(B) To be discontinued but you may still find it in shops.

(C) May be hard to find in shops. Contact the head office on (08) 9388 1560 or email

sales@eurogem.com.au for details of your nearest distributor.

(D) When we went to press Sunbeam had taken over this brand but couldn't confirm the model's continued availability.

(E) This model can be refilled continuously without switching off, as its water container isn't under pressure.

(F) The switch is hard to operate and doesn't work instantaneously.

(G) Not a genuine 'steam off' switch — you have to switch the cleaner off and the steam gradually stops.

(H) Two years on the boiler, one year on parts.

Bust the dust

A selling point for some steam cleaners is the ability to deal with dustmites and allergens, which tend to accumulate around the home in bedding, soft furnishings (such as cushions and stuffed fabric upholstery), carpets and heavy curtains, and create havoc for some allergy sufferers.

We were unable to test this, but our sister organisation in the UK did. It steam-cleaned carpets using combination steam-vacuum models, and found that they removed only 60–70% of the allergens — less than a standard vacuum cleaner. Given this result, it seems unlikely that steam cleaners without the suction — like those in our test — would work any better.

An effective steam cleaner may contribute to making a house more allergen-free. But you can minimise the amount of allergens in your home by:

- Making it too dry for dustmites to breed in. Keeping your house well ventilated and keeping humidity low (avoid hanging washing inside to dry, for example) are key — although difficult to achieve in some parts of Australia.
- Banishing pets outside (cat hair, in particular, is a common allergen).
- Replacing carpets with hard flooring, where possible.
- Putting covers on mattresses and soft furnishings that can be washed regularly or replaced.
- Avoiding heavy curtains that are unlikely to be properly and regularly cleaned, and using blinds instead.

1 Overall score

The overall score was made up as follows:

- Cleaning: 70%
- Ease of use: 30%

2 Cleaning score

Our experts rated the performance of each steam cleaner (with its standard tools) when cleaning floor tiles, glass, medium build-up of soap scum, grout and cooktops. All aspects were weighted equally.

3 Ease of use score

These factors contributed equally:

- Ease of filling with water.
- Ease of manoeuvring.
- Tools.
- Controls.
- Heat-up time.
- Time in use before tank needs refilling.

4 'Steam-on' lock switch

Locks the trigger so it doesn't have to be pressed continuously for steam delivery.

5 'Steam-off' lock switch

Safety switch that locks the trigger, so if it's pressed accidentally it won't activate steam delivery.

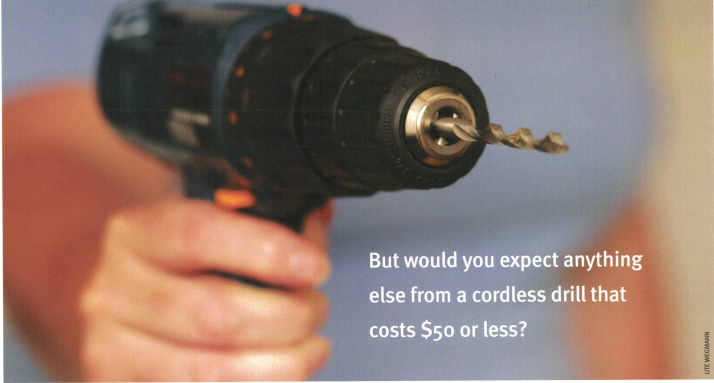
6 Price

If you're keen on buying a steam cleaner it's worth shopping around if the one you want is widely available. We bought two of the models (the ELECTROLUX and STEAM DREAM) for at least \$100 less than their recommended retail price.



The nylon jet nozzle brush supplied as standard with five of the models flattened quickly during testing, making it ineffective (see page 25 for more).

No guts, no glory ...



But would you expect anything else from a cordless drill that costs \$50 or less?

IN A NUTSHELL

|| Overall, they're not good performers. Consider buying one only if you're going to use it once in a while for basic jobs.

|| Even then, you'll have to be patient (or well-disciplined). Most of the batteries in the tested drills self-discharged quite quickly when not being used, so if it's longer than around two weeks between jobs you're likely to need to recharge them — and they take three hours or more and have no full-charge indicator.

If your DIY ambitions stretch to a garden pergola or timber deck, you can forget drills that cost \$50 or less — they just don't have the grunt and their batteries are no mini power stations.

However, if you're the kind of person who, every once in a blue moon, just needs to drill the odd small hole in timber or drive in a few small screws — to fix a flower pot onto a pergola or hang a picture, say — the best few drills on test might keep you happy enough.

But if you're also thinking you might need to drill the odd hole in masonry or brick, be warned: these drills aren't up to that. For that kind of occasional job, you'd do better to buy a basic mains-powered hammer drill (expect to pay around \$100–\$150).

OUR TEST

We were keen to see what sort of tasks cheap cordless drills could accomplish, so we bought a range selling for \$50 and under and put them to work in our lab. We also measured their power (to see how they'd be able to cope with larger drill bits and harder materials) and torque (turning force, important for screwing large screws into timber, for example).

To check if the batteries were good enough to last the distance, we used pre-drilled medium-density fibreboard and counted how many of the

appropriately sized screws we could screw in, and then out. For more details of how we tested, see notes 1–4 on page 31.

MOSTLY HO-HUM

The best drill overall was the RYOBI CDL 1441P, but don't expect too much even from this one — it has limitations. In addition to drawbacks common to all the drills' batteries (see *Frustrating batteries*, page 30), it feels a little heavy and its slowest speed may be a bit too fast for some jobs (particularly screwdriving). It also lacks variable speed. However, it's the most powerful drill, has the highest torque, and rates third-best for battery capacity. It's probably the best overall for simple jobs around the home.

The GMC 444B rated best for battery capacity and is another you might find useful enough, although if you don't already own accessories like drill and screwdriver bits, it doesn't come with any and so you'll have to pay more to buy them.

The rest were decidedly ordinary. That said, if you're a total beginner and likely to remain only an occasional user, some models come with a good array of drill accessories and so would save you the expense of buying them separately. The ARLEC Enforcer, POWERMASTER PMCD14WF, SUPER WORKS CD18PK and POWERMASTER Plus BWCD142K (which comes

What to buy

The top two drills and four with a reasonable range of accessories are profiled in rank order. Prices are what we paid in November 2004.

RYOBI CDL 1441P

Price: \$48

Good points

- The most powerful drill on test.
- The best for torque (turning force).
- Comes with two double-edged screwdriver bits (but the four drills below come with a much bigger variety of accessories).

Bad points

- Only slightly heavier than the others, but feels heavy.
- Doesn't have variable speed; has two fixed speeds instead.
- Low speed is a little too fast for screwdriving.



GMC 444B

Price: \$34

Good points

- Good battery capacity.
- The battery can be recharged while attached to the drill.
- Comfortable to use.

Bad points

- It comes with no accessories.



Consider the following models if you'd like a drill that comes with an assortment of drill and screwdriver bits (see the table, page 30, for full details). They have no particular good points except these accessories, unless noted below, and some have no particular bad points either (beyond all the models' generally low level of performance).

ARLEC ENFORCER KCT12VC

Price: \$45

Good points

- The battery can be recharged while attached to the drill.
- Comfortable to use.
- Low torque.



SUPER WORKS CD18PK

Price: \$40

Bad points

- Not many torque settings, and difficult to rotate the collar to the drill position.
- Difficult to change rotation direction without changing grip.
- Large, square, uncomfortable grip.



POWERMASTER PMCD14WF

Price: \$30

- No particular good or bad points.



POWERMASTER PLUS BWC142K

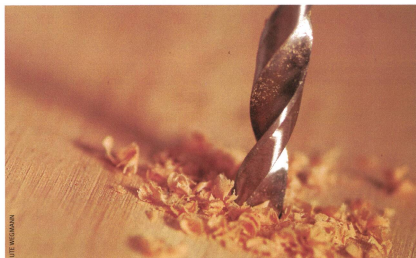
Price: \$40

Good points

- A particularly large assortment of accessories — see the table for details.



Brand / model (in rank order)	PERFORMANCE				FEATURES			
	1 Overall score (%)	2 Performance score (%)	3 Ease of use score (%)	4 Charger score (%)	5 Noise (dB)	Carry case	Spare battery	Other accessories supplied
RYOBI CDL 1441P	62	65	76	40	67	✓		2 double-ended screwdriver bits
GMC 444B	59	56	76	50	66			None
ARLEC Enforcer KCT12VC	54	47	77	50	64	✓		6 drill bits, 6 driver bits with magnetic adaptor
POWERMASTER PMCD14WF	54	53	73	40	62	✓		6 drill bits, 6 driver bits with magnetic adaptor, 2 do
SUPER WORKS CD18PK	54	55	64	40	63	✓		6 drill bits, 6 driver bits with magnetic adaptor, 2 do
POWERMASTER Plus BWCD142K	53	50	76	40	66	✓	✓	22 drill bits, 6 driver bits plus magnetic adaptor, 2 do
SUPER WORKS RD12VC2B	53	54	71	30	62	✓	✓	6 drill bits, 6 driver bits with magnetic adaptor, 2 do
XU1 XCD-120	52	50	69	40	64			Double-ended screwdriver bit t
OZITO CDG-200	51	47	73	40	62			2 double-ended screwdriver bits
WARRIOR WA-CD18P	50	46	70	40	60	✓		Double-ended screwdriver bit t
GMC NLE12K	48	44	76	30	65	✓	✓	None
G-FORCE G-CD12	46	48	57	30	63			Double-ended screwdriver bit
WARRIOR WA-CD12P	44	37	70	40	60			Double-ended screwdriver bit t
MAXIMATE PBCD9.6	40	32	66	40	60			Double-ended screwdriver bit t



WHAT ABOUT THE WORKERS? (AND THE ENVIRONMENT)

It's really quite astonishing that these drills cost \$50 or less (some even less than \$20). Sure, they only do a basic job, but they're still a relatively sophisticated manufactured consumer product.

At these prices, if you're wondering how much the workers get paid and how attentive the manufacturers are to environmental management, so are we...

with by far the most drill bits and other accessories) were the best models that come with plenty of extras.

The **WARRIOR** WA-CD12P and **MAXIMATE** PBCD9.6 are a particularly feeble duo — these drills just don't generate enough power or torque, and both gave a poor performance.

FRUSTRATING BATTERIES

These drills all require a long charge time, from three hours to five or six. More expensive models tend to fully charge in one hour or less, have a full-charge indicator and reduce the charge to a trickle when the battery is fully charged.

None of these drills has a full-charge indicator and none reduces the charge to a trickle. So not only will you have to plan ahead and charge your battery well before you want to start work, you'll also have to keep an eye on the time, because if you forget your battery's charging it might overheat, with the risk of permanent damage.

Additionally, our tester noticed that most of the batteries self-discharged very quickly, so if it's more than two weeks between jobs, plan to recharge the night before.

UNNECESSARY SPARE?

Some models come with a spare battery, but we're not sure of the value of this with a drill best suited only to light, very basic tasks.

With a high-performance drill, an extra battery is definitely a plus, as the drill's likely to be used for more demanding tasks that consume more power and take longer. But the occasional user with a relatively quick and easy job isn't likely to be drilling all day — so maybe an extra battery isn't the major plus it might seem.

We'd suggest that if the job you're contemplating is worth a reserve battery, it's probably worth a better drill too.

NO HIGH SPEED

At this price, you certainly have to keep your expectations real. For example, apart from battery performance, one noticeable lack in all but one of the cheapies tested is the absence of a second, higher speed range. More expensive drills tend to have this, which is particularly useful for drilling. On the other hand, for screwdriving what you want is lower speed combined with high torque.

EASY TO USE?

At least most of the drills are easy to use. Easiest of all is the **ARLEC** Enforcer, while the best model overall, the **RYOBI**, rated equal second-best for ease of use.

For more on ease of use, see *What to look for*, right.

SPECIFICATIONS

	Keyless chuck	Number of speeds	Claimed speed (rpm)	Charge time (hours)	Weight (kg)	Voltage (V)	Warranty (months)	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	Price (\$)*
✓	✓	2	0-600 (A)	3-6	1.7	14.4	24	China	Ryobi	48
✓	✓	Variable	0-500	3-5	1.6	14.4	24 (B)	China	Global Machinery Co.	34
✓	✓	Variable	0-550	3-5	1.5	12.0	24 (C)	China	KMart	45
✓	✓	Variable	0-550	3-5	1.5	14.4	30 (B)	China	Positac	30
✓	✓	Variable	0-550	3-5	1.6	18.0	24	China	Super Cheap Auto	40
✓	✓	Variable	0-550	3-5	1.5	14.4	30 (B)	China	Positac	40
✓	✓	Variable	0-550	3-5	1.5	12.0	24	China	Super Cheap Auto	50
✓	✓	Variable	0-550	3-6	1.4	12.0	6	China	Bunnings	17
✓	✓	Variable	0-500	3-5	1.5	12.0	36	China	Ozito Industries	30
✓	✓	Variable	0-550	3-5	1.6	18.0	24	China	Mitre 10	50
✓	✓	Variable	0-500	3-5	1.4	12.0	24 (B)	China	Global Machinery Co.	40
✓	✓	1	550	3-5	1.4	12.0	6	China	Mitre 10	25
✓	✓	Variable	0-550	3-5	1.4	12.0	24	China	Mitre 10	30
✓	✓	1	550	3-5	1.4	9.6	12	China	KMart	19

* Prices are those we paid in November 2004, rounded to the nearest dollar.

(A) Ryobi claims 0-600 rpm but we measured 530 and 600 rpm for the two settings.

(B) 30-day money-back satisfaction guarantee.

(C) One year on battery.

ed screwdriver bit
ed screwdriver bit
ed screwdriver bit, 3 m tape measure
ed screwdriver bits

What to look for

When you're next sizing up a drill in a shop, consider these points:

■ **Changing direction of rotation:** If you want to go from driving a screw into a piece of timber to removing it, the drill needs to be able to do this. Rotation direction is changed by pushing a button just above the trigger. Ideally it should be possible to do it with your thumb or forefinger without changing your grip. Unless you have particularly long fingers this was only possible on the **ARLEC**, both **GMC** models and the **RYOBI**. With the other models you have to stretch your fingers or change your grip slightly to operate the switch.

■ **Trigger/speed control:** This should be easy to operate and give good variable control from barely rotating to full speed. Good control at low speed is particularly important when trying to start a screw. The majority of the models tested have good trigger/speed control. However, the **RYOBI** only has a two-stage trigger rather than variable control, and the first stage is likely to be too fast for some jobs. The **G FORCE** and **MAXIMATE** models have a single (non-variable) speed.

■ **Torque control:** Allows you to set the drill so that its head slips at a lower setting, to avoid overdriving a screw into soft wood, for example. The control should have a large range of settings, be easy to grip and turn, be positive at each stop and be well labelled. The **SUPER WORKS CD18PK** and **XU1** don't have many settings and it's difficult to rotate the collar to the setting. The **ARLEC** has the best torque control.

■ **Keyless chuck:** Common on drills these days, this allows hand-tightening of drill bits rather than using a key (which is too easy to lose). All the drills have this except the **G-FORCE**, which also has no storage for the chuck key.

■ **Handle comfort:** Look for a model whose handle feels a good size for your hands. Check that it feels comfortable to hold and is well-balanced. Large squarish handles made from hard plastic tend to be uncomfortable.

1 Overall score

A combination of the following scores:

- Performance: 60%
- Ease of use: 20%
- Charger: 20%

2 Performance score

A combination of the scores for battery capacity, torque and power, weighted equally.

■ We measured the **battery capacity** by counting the number of screws we could screw in, and out, of pre-drilled medium-density fibreboard when the drill was fully charged. We averaged the results of at least two tests and converted this to a score.

■ We measured **torque** (twisting force) by running the drills in a test rig at maximum speed and applying ever increasing resistance force. The point at which the maximum torque that the drill can develop balances the applied force is the point at which the drill stops, and is called the stall torque. Good screwdriving requires high torque at low speed, so this assessment is a simulated screwdriving test.

■ The **power** was determined using the drill in a dynamometer (a machine designed to measure torque and speed) at 65% of the drill's maximum speed (which represents a task-load roughly equivalent to safe and effective drill usage). Power is a combination of speed and torque, and the greater it is, the easier the drill can cope with larger drill bits and harder materials.

3 Ease of use score

A combination (weighted equally) of the following ease of use considerations:

- Changing rotation direction.
- Using the trigger and controlling drill speed.
- Torque control.
- The chuck.
- Removing and replacing the battery.
- Comfort in use.
- Weight and balance.

4 Charger score

A combination of the following assessments:

- Time taken to fully recharge.
- Whether the charger indicates that the battery is fully charged; none does.
- Whether the charger reduces to a trickle charge when the battery is fully charged (helps prevent damage to the battery). None does this.
- Whether the battery can be recharged without removing it from the drill.
- Visibility of the charging light.

5 Noise

Noise was measured at one metre from the drill.

Space invaders

Do you need a new car to go bush with, or one with seven seats? Here's what our readers thought about four popular 4WDs and a people mover.

If you're shopping for a new car, information on what a car is really like to drive and use day-to-day is very valuable but — unless family members or friends happen to drive a model you're interested in — difficult to come by.

That's why we asked a small panel of CHOICE readers to tell us why they chose a particular model, whether they've had problems with it, its strengths and weaknesses, and whether they consider it good value for money.

Thanks very much to everyone who participated. We received a sufficient number of survey responses to enable us to report on the **FORD Territory**, **NISSAN Patrol**, **TOYOTA Kluger** and **TOYOTA Prado**, as well as the **KIA Carnival** people mover.

Note that none of these models has been crash-tested by the Australian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP).



TAMARA GRANHAM

"I chose the Territory with rear-wheel drive because I was after a seven-seater, not necessarily a 4WD. It's a very comfortable car and good value for money, despite its relatively high fuel consumption in the city."

John Randall, Ashfield, NSW



PETER BERNARD

Ford Territory

Price range: \$38,990–\$53,950

Versions: TX, TS, Ghia (each in rear-wheel or all-wheel drive)

Body styles: Wagon

Engine options: 4.0 L six cylinder

POPULAR REAR-WHEEL-DRIVE OPTION

Our **TERRITORY** reviewers were after a spacious, comfortable and reliable car with a good range of features. The **TOYOTA Kluger** was the main rival, but the **FORD**'s space, perceived value for money, and the fact that it's made in Australia and available in a rear-wheel-drive (RWD) version, tipped the scales towards it. Our reviewers reported only one minor problem requiring repair with the car.

Most of our readers decided on a RWD model — taking the car off-road clearly wasn't their main aim, and the feedback regarding the **TERRITORY**'s off-road abilities was consequently rather mixed.

They found praise for the car's comfort, space and equipment level, but were less impressed by its fuel consumption (mainly around town). Fuel costs were generally considered to be medium to very high, other running costs as medium, and the purchase price medium to high. But all think the car offers good to very good value for money overall.

A couple of readers had issues with blind spots, and the need to slam the doors to shut them properly — especially the tailgate.

Headlamp and bonnet protectors, a towbar and mudflaps were the most popular extras, and two reviewers would have liked the option of a sunroof.



Toyota Kluger

Price range: \$43,990–\$59,320

Versions: CV, CVX, Grande (all AWD)

Body styles: Wagon

Engine options: 3.3 L V6

VERY COMFORTABLE BUT SOME DESIGN FLAWS

Most of our KLUGER reviewers decided on the CVX version. Getting a reliable car was their first consideration when shopping around, but most also looked for comfort and seven seats.

The FORD Territory, SUBARU Forester and SUBARU Outback were the main contenders also considered by our reviewers, but they said they preferred the KLUGER for its space, perceived value for money and fuel economy.

They also praised the car's comfort, ease of parking and all-wheel drive — however, the latter probably more for the safety it provides on wet or

unsealed roads, because five (out of 11) thought the car's off-road performance was only OK.

Points of complaint included the cornering, ventilation, fixed radio antenna, difficult-to-read instruments and — a bit surprisingly — the exterior and interior styling of the car.

Accordingly, some of our reviewers would have liked to see an electric antenna and separate air conditioning for the rear seats on the KLUGER's options list.

The main extras they bought included parking sensors, towbar and safety pack (including curtain airbags and traction control).

Three reviewed cars were affected by a recall regarding the child safety locks, and there were three repairs under warranty.

The KLUGER's price was generally considered to be medium to high, its running costs as medium. But the overall value for money was still regarded good by most.

"I picked the Kluger mainly because I found it easier to drive and park in the city, as it's lighter and shorter than similar competitors. Internally, it's very comfortable and smart, but it lacks separate air conditioning for the rear cabin. Also, the external styling is a bit old-fashioned."

Tim Norman, Port Melbourne, Victoria

Nissan Patrol

Price range: \$49,540–\$77,690

Versions: DX, ST, ST-S, ST-L, Ti (all 4WD)

Body styles: Wagon

Engine options: 3.0 L four-cylinder turbo diesel (all but Ti); 4.2 L six-cylinder turbo diesel (all but Ti); 4.8 L six-cylinder petrol (all but DX and ST)

POWERFUL TURBO DIESEL

Most of our PATROL reviewers were men. And all of them chose the 3.0 L turbo diesel engine, mostly in the ST version of the car.

Their main aim by far was getting a reliable car. Quite a few reviewers use it for rural and off-road driving (a bull bar, towbar and driving lights were among the most popular options), where this aspect is obviously important.

The TOYOTA Landcruiser and Prado were the other models most likely to make our readers' shortlist, but they decided the PATROL was cheaper to buy or better value for money.

All reviewers rated the car highly overall (especially its reliability and off-road and

towing capabilities), despite a few repairs under warranty and a number of criticisms. For example, some weren't completely happy with some comfort aspects (ride quality and noise), the car's design (old-fashioned plastic dash, visibility out of the car), the lack of ventilation for the rear seats and the audio system.

City drivers criticised the car's big turning circle and fuel consumption. While most think the car's not cheap to buy and run, its overall value for money is generally seen as good.

"The Patrol offers great off-road and towing performance. It has superb power and excellent fuel economy for such a heavy vehicle. On the downside, its size and poor turning circle can be a bit of a pain in the city."

Mark Peacock, Gwelup, WA



Toyota Prado

Price range: \$44,170–\$73,510

Versions: GX, GXL, VX, Grande (all 4WD)

Body styles: Wagon

Engine options: 2.7 L four-cylinder petrol (GX); 4.0 L V6 petrol; 3.0 L four-cylinder turbo diesel



STRONG ON AND OFF THE ROAD

Most of our reviewers decided on the GXL version, and there was an almost even mix of petrol and diesel engines.

They were looking for a reliable and safe 4WD, and also considered the **LAND ROVER** Discovery, **MITSUBISHI** Pajero, **NISSAN** Patrol and **TOYOTA** Landcruiser, but decided on the **PRADO** mainly because of its perceived better reliability.

However, three (out of 12) cars were affected by recalls, there were four repairs under warranty and a couple of problems with the car's electrics.

The cars are used for a mix of city and rural driving, but city

driving isn't seen as one of its strengths. Other criticisms included the **PRADO**'s acceleration and cornering, and the ventilation system — rear air vents were missed by a number of readers. A couple of reviewers also complained about the quality of the factory-fitted tyres, and visibility out of the car.

On the other hand, **PRADO** owners praised the car's drivability on and off the road, its towing power, space and massive 180 L fuel tank.

While the car seems to be well equipped (a towbar, bull bar and tinted windows were the main options bought), our readers generally thought the **PRADO** is on the expensive side to buy and run, and the overall value for money was only considered good to OK.

"My Prado GXL is very good on and off the road, and the 180 L tank provides great range. So it's a shame it doesn't come with appropriate 4WD tyres. And it could certainly do with rear air conditioning vents."

Dan Becker, Newman, WA

Kia Carnival

Price range: \$29,990–\$32,500

Versions: 'Standard'

Body styles: Wagon

Engine options: 2.5 L V6

GREAT VALUE FOR MONEY

The majority of our reviewers were women, and nine (out of 10) have five or more people living in their household. So it's hardly surprising that seven seats with versatile seating options, space, a good price and safety were their main criteria when searching for the right model.

They usually also considered a range of other people movers, such as the **CHRYSLER** Voyager, **HOLDEN** Zafira, **HONDA** Odyssey, **MAZDA** MPV and **TOYOTA** Tarago, but decided on the **CARNIVAL** for its perceived better value for money. Its purchase price and running costs are generally considered low to medium, and its overall value for money was rated 'very good' by all 10 reviewers.

The main options our readers purchased were tinted windows, floor mats, a towbar, reversing sensors and cruise control.



"The Carnival is great value for money. It's very comfortable and roomy, and we love the versatile seat configuration and individual air conditioning vents. However, it could do with a bit more power, and it has a number of blind spots."

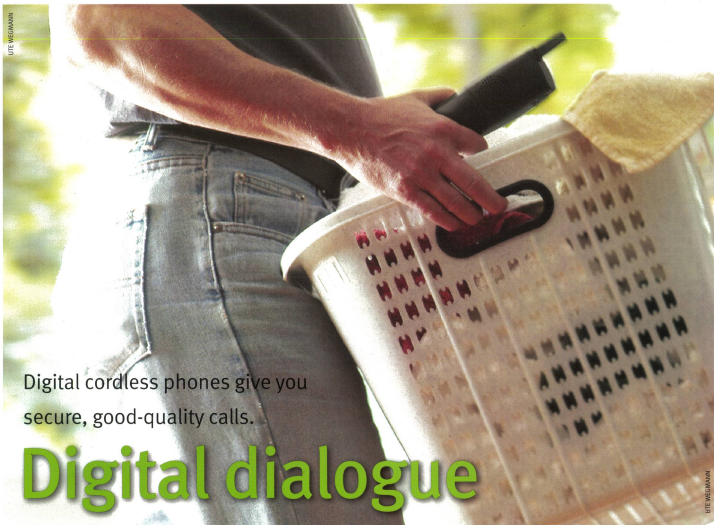
Lou Headon, Maclean, NSW

The cars are mainly used around town, and on many occasions carry five or more passengers. The owners praised the car's versatility, accessibility, comfort and ventilation/dual air conditioning system.

However, some thought the **CARNIVAL**

was underpowered, while others criticised it for its large turning circle, audio system, lack of security features and road noise.

One owner has had ongoing problems with the car's ignition, and there were three repairs under warranty.



Digital cordless phones give you secure, good-quality calls.

Digital dialogue

Digital cordless phones are about to push analogue models off the market. They provide better sound quality and encrypt your conversations, so eavesdropping isn't likely to be an issue (unless someone can listen in with a high-tech scanner, as used by the military or government) — particularly important if you use your credit card over the phone.

Digital technology allows for small and lightweight handsets that not only look similar to mobile phones, but also come with features and functions that used to be the domain of mobiles — such as an LCD display, caller ID and a choice of ring tones. And **TELSTRA** says it's working on a landline SMS service that will allow you to send and receive short text messages with your digital home phone.

There are currently two digital systems: digital enhanced cordless telecommunications (DECT) and digital spread spectrum (DSS). DSS is claimed to have longer range and better sound quality, but our test results didn't confirm that conclusively. The only consistent advantage we found was the longer outdoor range of DSS compared to DECT models — so if your backyard is several hundred metres long, a DSS model may be for you.

And while both DSS models had very long standby times in our battery test, their talk times were comparatively short.

IN A NUTSHELL

- We looked at 11 digital models (without an answering machine) between \$59 and \$229.
- They all do their job, but check the differences in features and functions before you decide on one.

WHAT TO BUY

UNIDEN DSS2415	\$159
TELSTRA F2100	\$80

However, all the tested phones work just fine, so the others are also worth a look if you can find them for a good price and they have extra features you want. See *Features they (almost) all have* for common features, and the table for some others (both on page 37).

PERFORMANCE

Brand / model (in rank order)	1 Overall score (%)	2 Battery score (%)	3 Sound quality score (%)	4 Range score (%)	5 Ease of use score (%)	6 Talk time (hours)	7 Standby time (days)	8 Recharge time (hours)	9 Range (outside / inside 1 / inside 2; m)	10 F louc (max)
UNIDEN DSS2415 (A)	77	70	75	89	79	7.0	14+	8.5	500 / 100 / 90	71
TELSTRA F2100 (B)	76	86	72	74	67	18.0	14+	11.5	250 / 100 / 60	64
PANASONIC KX-TG5230ALM (C)	73	71	73	72	78	6.0	14+	5.0	1000 / 70 / 60	82
UNIDEN WDECT 2315 (D)	73	68	67	85	76	9.0	12.0	8.5	450 / 100 / 80	78
UNIDEN WDECT 2300 (E)	72	67	67	85	76	9.0	12.0	9.0	450 / 100 / 80	78
GE AU27850GE3	70	69	70	77	62	17.0	7.0	7.0	200 / 100 / 70	60
TELSTRA F3000 (F)	69	57	69	79	76	14.5	5.0	8.5	350 / 100 / 70	77
DORO 520 (G)	68	60	79	67	66	13.5	6.0	7.0	350 / 70 / 70	76
DORO 920	67	63	70	78	55	12.5	8.5	9.5	250 / 100 / 70	70
TELSTRA F2600 (H)	67	62	75	63	64	18.0	5.5	11.0	300 / 80 / 50	60
ORICOM P100 (J)	66	67	70	61	63	6.0	12.0	3.0	200 / 70 / 60	64

Profiles

The models in the *What to buy* list are profiled in rank order. Prices shown are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in January 2005.

UNIDEN DSS2415

Price: \$159

Very good all-round performer with the best overall range and many features, but relatively short talk time (it takes longer to fully recharge than you get to talk). You can also buy versions with an answering machine and two or three handsets; see footnote (A), above right, for details



What to look for

■ Cordless phones rely on **mains power**, so keep an additional ordinary phone for emergency use in case of a power failure.

■ Before you buy, add up the **ringer equivalence numbers (REN)** of the equipment you already have connected to your phone line. Any phone, fax, answering machine, etc., draws from the line's capacity. The amount drawn is the REN, which is usually printed on the bottom of the appliance. Generally, phone lines have maximum REN capacity of 3. If the sum of the RENs of your appliances exceeds this, they may not work properly (for example, the phone may not ring).

■ Consider whether you want a model with an integrated **answering machine**. None of the models in this test has one, but see footnote (A), above right.

■ Try the handset before you buy to make sure it's not too small or too heavy, is **comfortable** to hold and fits well to your face.

■ If you have a large house, a model that supports **multiple handsets** (for example, one on each floor) is useful. It also allows you to switch calls between handsets, and with some models to make free calls from handset to handset via an intercom. Additional handsets are available for most of the tested models — see the table footnotes for details.

■ Alternatively, look for a model with a **dial pad and speaker on the base**, which allows you to make calls from the base. Only the **PANASONIC** in our test has this feature.

■ If applicable, check whether the phone is compatible with a **hearing aid**. None of the models in this test claims to be.

TELSTRA F2100

Price: \$80 **BEST BUY**

The equal longest talk time of all the tested models, but low on features, and there are better choices if a long range is important. You can also get a version that supports two handsets — see footnote (B).



FEATURES					SPECIFICATIONS				
Handsets supported	Headset connection	Backlit keypad	Wall-mountable	Ring tones on handset	12 REN	Type	Warranty (months)	Manufacturer / distributor	Price (\$)*
✓	✓			16	1.0	DSS	12	Uniden	159
				1	0.5	DECT	13	Tech Pacific	80
✓	✓	✓		7	0.1	DSS	12	Panasonic	229
✓	✓	✓	✓	20	1.0	DECT	12	Uniden	109
✓			✓	20	1.0	DECT	12	Uniden	89
				3	0.1	DECT	12	Thomson Telecom	60
		✓		5	0.1	DECT	13	Tech Pacific	200
			✓	6	0.5	DECT	12	Doro	79
✓			✓	3	0.1	DECT	12	Doro	90
✓			✓	9	0.1	DECT	13	Tech Pacific	100
				5	0.5	DECT	12	Oricom International	59

* Prices shown are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in January 2005.

(A) Additional handset DSS2405, \$119. Also available as a twin set DSS2405 (two handsets plus answering machine, \$259) and triple set (three handsets plus answering machine and headset, \$329).

(B) Also available in a twin pack supporting two handsets (P2100 1+1, \$140).

(C) You can also make calls from the phone's base. Additional handset KX-TGA520ALM, \$139.

(D) Also available as a twin pack (WDECT 2315+1, \$179); additional handset WDECT 2305, \$99.

(E) Additional handset WDECT 2300, \$89.

(F) Additional handset CLS3050, \$150.

(G) Also available as a twin pack \$20+1, \$109.

(H) Additional handset CLS2610, \$80.

(I) Also available in a twin pack supporting two handsets (P100+1, \$99). According to the distributor, it's also technically identical to the P90 (\$59), which has cosmetic differences only, and is also available in a twin pack (P90+1, \$99). There are also triple (\$129) and quad (\$159) packs for both models.

- **Headset connection:** Using a headset can be handy if you make long calls or need to make notes during them.
- **Look for clearly labelled, large keys and a backlit keypad,** which is handy if you need to use the phone in poor light.

FEATURES THEY (ALMOST) ALL HAVE

- **LCD display.**
- **Caller ID compatible:** If you've subscribed to caller ID, the phone lets you know the number a call is coming from, unless the owner has requested anonymity.
- **Digital signal encryption** secures your conversations and over-the-phone credit card transactions from eavesdropping by all but the most high-tech scanners.
- **Last number redial.**
- **Pager** from base station to handset, which is useful if you've lost the handset around the house or in the garden (only the **PANASONIC** can also page the base station from the handset).
- **Battery-low indicator.**
- **Nickel-metal-hydride (NiMH) battery** (except the **GE**, which has a nickel-cadmium one). NiMH batteries don't contain toxic cadmium, and are therefore safer to dispose of at the end of their life.
- **At least three ringer volume and voice volume control settings** on the handset. All except the **TELSTRA F2100** allow you to switch off the handset ringer.
- **Out of-range warning.**
- **Mute button.**
- **Call waiting** compatible.
- **In case you're interested,** except for the **PANASONIC** they're all made in China (it's made in Malaysia).

1 Overall score

The overall score is a combination of battery performance (30%), sound quality (30%), range (20%) and ease of use (20%).

2 Battery score

We measured the phones' maximum talk and standby times, as well as the recharge time (see notes 6 to 8).

3 Sound quality score

We assessed speech clarity, speech loudness, line noise and background noise reduction.

4 Range score

We measured the range over which you can use the phone outside and inside a house (see note 9 for details).

5 Ease of use score

We measured and scored the maximum ringer volume, and a panel of three assessed the:

- Clarity and completeness of the instruction manual.

- Layout of keys and controls.
- Readability of the numbers and labels.
- Feel and comfort of the handset.
- Ease of cleaning the phone.
- Use of special features.
- LCD display.

6 Talk time

The number of hours the phone lasted in talk mode, rounded to the nearest half-hour.

7 Standby time

The number of days the phone lasted in standby mode, rounded to the nearest half day. We stopped the test after a fortnight.

8 Recharge time

The time taken to recharge, rounded to the nearest half-hour.

9 Range outside / inside a house

■ **Outside:** The base station was set up with a direct line of sight to the handset. We measured the distance (rounded to the nearest 10 m) at which voice transmission became unintelligible or dropped out.

■ **Inside:** The impact of walls and other obstructions on the range was measured to a maximum of 100 m (rounded to the nearest 10 m). For the **inside 1** test, the signal had to travel through a plasterboard and a wooden wall. For the **inside 2** test, it had to travel through a plasterboard and a brick wall. The results are comparative only, as different wall and ceiling constructions will affect the range differently.

10 Ringer loudness

Measured at 1 m from the handset while it wasn't on the base.

11 Features

See *What to look for*, for explanations of some of these.

12 REN: ringer equivalence number

Generally, phone lines have a maximum REN capacity of 3, so pick a phone with a low REN if you already have a lot of other appliances attached to the line. See *What to look for* for more.



Is microfibre cleaning the way forward?

THE 'GREEN' CLEAN

IN A NUTSHELL

In general, our trialists thought the mitts performed on a par with their usual cleaning methods, and all three brands on test rated similarly.

Using the mitts will, for most people, involve changing a lifetime's cleaning habits. Having tried them and seen the price tags, only a third to a half of trialists (depending on the brand they'd tried) said they'd be willing to switch. See Clean converts, page 40, for details.

If you think this way of cleaning is for you, we suggest you buy a cheap brand of mitt to try first — you can always experiment with other microfibre brands and products if you're converted.

It's that time again: you're scrubbing away at the walls of your shower, chemical cleaner to hand, heady from the fumes while streams of dirty water flow down the drain.

At a moment like this, you may feel like reconsidering your cleaning options, and microfibre mitts seem like a great alternative. They're made of minute synthetic fibres that trap dirt, dust, grease and moisture from surfaces, and are claimed to save time and money. And the beauty of them is that no chemicals are required, and only a little (cold) water is needed, to get results. But are they easy to use, and do they do the job well?

The three mitts on trial were ENJO Bathroom Glove, OATES Clean Enviro Bathroom Mitt and SABCO Onewipe Cleaning Mitt Bathroom & Laundry. Our trialists tended to rate their performance as similar to their usual cleaning method — see *The trial*, page 40, for details. As one trialist summed up: "They're comparable to using other methods, no better and no worse. It's still cleaning!"

The trialists thought the ENJO mitt worked somewhat better in certain areas than the other two brands on trial, but in terms of overall cleaning ability the brands weren't significantly different.

As a **method of cleaning**, however, our trialists' opinions about the mitts in general were divided.



The Enjo (left), Sabco (centre) and Oates bathroom mitts.



Something's bugging me

Many trialists commented that although they felt the mitts made surfaces look clean, they were uncertain whether or not they were removing bacteria. While chemicals gave them confidence, the mitts didn't, leaving them asking the question, "Is cleaning with water alone hygienic enough?"

The answer is yes: microfibre mitts and cold water seem to remove dirt (and therefore bacteria) as effectively as chemical cleaners. If you wipe the surfaces dry afterwards it'll kill more bacteria and help prevent any surviving ones from multiplying.

However, as we've reported in the past, not all bacteria are bad for us, and for our immune system to work we need some exposure to harmful bacteria. And while it's important to keep surfaces in contact with food as bacteria-free as possible, eliminating bacteria from every surface in your home — whatever cleaning method you use — probably won't much reduce your chances of getting sick, as most household infections like colds and sore throats are caused by viruses, not bacteria.

WHAT THEY LIKED

- **No need for chemical cleaners**, resulting in cost savings (no need to buy cleaning agents), water-saving (no need to rinse away chemical cleaner suds or residue), less damage to the environment and less exposure to chemical cleaner fumes.
- **Convenience and ease of use.** Trialists on the whole thought the mitt design made it easy to wipe down surfaces, with the wristband of the SABCO mitt particularly useful for preventing it from slipping off during cleaning.
- **Effective.** Some trialists felt the mitts did a good job removing soap scum and picking up and holding on to dust and dirt, without redistributing it to other areas.

WHAT THEY DISLIKED

- **Germ concerns.** The main concern appeared to be about how well the mitts disinfected surfaces and removed germs compared to chemical cleaners (see *Something's bugging me*, above, for more). Even some trialists who thought they cleaned well and indicated they'd willingly switch to using a mitt said they'd still feel the need to use chemical cleaners at least periodically to ensure surfaces were thoroughly clean — essentially reducing one of the main benefits of the mitts.

Continued overleaf

A BETTER CLEAN

Like a number of our trialists, Meagan was converted to cleaning mitts after the trial, despite being unsure of them at first. "Because you're only using cold water and no chemicals, I didn't expect them to clean properly, but they're really effective and easy to use.

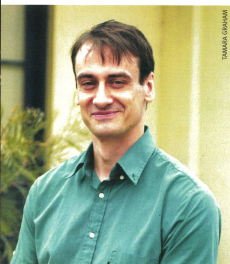
"The first time around it required a bit more elbow grease than normal, but not a huge effort. And it got easier. It's also faster as you're not waiting for chemicals to work, and you dry down surfaces as you go along.

"My bathroom is noticeably cleaner now, and the mitts have really brought out the shine in the chrome.

"I've got a baby daughter, so I particularly like that I don't have to use chemicals. I can keep the mitt in the bathroom, and every night after her bath I just run it around to wipe off the ring."



TIMARA GRAMER



TAMARA CHAMBERLAIN

TOO MUCH HARD WORK

Quite reasonably, Michael's primary priority for cleaning is that it should be easy. "I don't enjoy cleaning, so the last thing I want is to have to put a lot of effort into it.

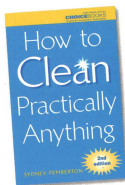
"I normally use a chemical spray to clean my bathroom, and it's so easy — you can actually see it doing the work.

"It was nice knowing that I wasn't inhaling chemicals. But personally, I prefer to open the windows, spray my shower with cleaning product, then come back a few minutes later and wash the chemicals and dirt down the drain.

"Cleaning with mitts required a lot of effort, took too long, and ate into my leisure time — I'd rather work out at the gym, not in the bathroom!"

From page 39

- **Elbow grease** required, especially for removing stubborn stains. And some trialists had trouble picking up and holding debris such as hair and fluff with the mitts.
- The need to **wipe surfaces dry** with another cloth after using the mitt, which increased the time and effort required for cleaning.
- **Removing excess water** from the mitts. This was a problem for some trialists, who felt the mitts sometimes got too wet during cleaning. Some also found the mitts' drying time too long.
- **Cleaning the mitts.** Some trialists didn't like the



NEED IDEAS TO MAKE CLEANING EASIER?

For simple, practical and environmentally friendly cleaning solutions, check out the **CHOICE** book *How to Clean Practically Anything*. To order a copy call 1800 069 552 toll-free or go to www.choice.com.au and click on Books & Magazines.



THE TRIAL

We tested three widely known brands of microfibre cleaning mitts: **ENJO**, **OATES** and **SABCO**. Each brand has a range of microfibre products for dusting and cleaning the kitchen, floors and cars, among other things, but for the purpose of this trial we looked at bathroom mitts only.

We recruited 34 trialists, and each was randomly allocated two brands to test, each for a two-week period. Each brand was tested at least 22 times.

The survey asked trialists to use each mitt on the main bathroom surfaces (mirror, shower screen, basin, bath, tiles), and no other cleaning products were used to clean these surfaces during the trial period. Mitts were used and cared for according to the product instructions provided by the manufacturer.

Trialists rated how well the mitts performed, how they compared to their usual cleaning method, and outlined what they liked or disliked about the mitts.

idea of adding a dirty mitt to their normal wash, or felt that not being able to use fabric conditioners/softeners when washing the mitt — as the care instructions specify — was inconvenient, meaning you'd have to wash them separately.

CLEAN CONVERTS?

After testing each mitt, trialists were told its price and asked whether they'd be willing to use it instead of their usual cleaning method. The percentage that said 'yes' to switching, by product, were as follows:

- **ENJO Bathroom Glove** (\$38): 33%.
- **OATES Clean Enviro Bathroom Mitt** (\$11): 50%.
- **SABCO Onewipe Cleaning Mitt Bathroom & Laundry** (\$10): 43%.

(Prices are based on the average price we paid in October/November 2004, rounded to the nearest dollar.)

So although trialists felt that the mitts, on average, cleaned similarly to their usual cleaning method, this didn't translate into high conversion rates, especially for the higher-priced **ENJO**.

Our trialists, however, didn't use the mitts till the end of their lives. They're all meant for multiple uses, but **ENJO** claims its products last longer than others and that its bathroom mitts, for example, should last an average of two years, depending on how you use them. Only using the mitts in your own home will show whether the costs even out for you or not vs chemical cleaners.

THE VERDICT

You may find that microfibre mitts give results no better than your usual cleaning method, but as a way of cleaning they have some added benefits — not the least being a reduction in the amount of chemicals you use, and the subsequent impact of this on the environment and your health. In particular, pregnant women and people who are sensitive to household chemicals may want to give them a go.

But this way of cleaning doesn't suit everyone, so if you're trying it for the first time we suggest you buy a cheap brand of mitt to begin with — it'll save you money initially and you can always experiment with other microfibre brands and products if you're converted.

WHERE TO BUY THEM

Both **OATES** and **SABCO** mitts are widely available in major supermarkets, but you have to order **ENJO** mitts through an **ENJO** consultant. To arrange a demonstration go to www.enjo.com.au or call 1800 222 540 or 1800 648 334.

All the clothes dryers reported on here get your clothes dry, but some do it faster and more energy efficiently than others.

The drying game



LITE WEGAMANN

Clothes dryers are simple appliances, most consisting basically of a heating element, a filter, a fan and a tumbler. As such, pretty much every dryer will get your clothes dry. And they'll probably do so for years — clothes dryers were very reliable in our recent appliance reliability survey (see page 42).

So choosing the best clothes dryer for you comes down to a few basic questions. How many clothes do you need to dry regularly? Is drying time important? How automated do you want the whole process to be? Where and how do you want to install it? And how much are you willing to pay?

BIG DRYERS — FOR A PRICE

The dryers we assessed ranged in price from \$329 to as much as \$1799, so the big question is, what bang do you get for the extra bucks?

Paying more mostly buys you speedier drying times, a bigger capacity, some extra features and auto technology, such as a sensor that keeps the machine running until it detects the load is dry (though some cheaper models also have a sensor — see the table, page 44).

The top-rating machines in this update are two new, pricy and very big MAYTAGS. With a capacity

of 9 kg, they dry lots of clothes very quickly. So if you have a big family with plenty of clothes, sheets and towels to wash and little space to line-dry them, you might think forking out for one of these models — costing \$1599 and \$1799 — could be worthwhile.

On the other hand, if your dryer is largely a rainy-day back-up or you don't have loads of washing, there's no need to spend anything like that amount of money. See *What to buy*, below, for other good models.

IN A NUTSHELL

■ Paying more can now get you a bigger and faster dryer — a couple of good 9 kg models have been released, but you'll pay up to \$1800 or so both to buy one and to run it for 10 years. Most people won't need to spend nearly that much for a good dryer.

WHAT TO BUY

Less than 5 kg

FISHER & PAYKEL ED 56 (4.5 kg) \$459

FISHER & PAYKEL AD39 (3.5 kg) **▶ BEST BUY** \$329

5 kg to 7 kg

New MIELE T220 (5 kg) \$1699

New WHIRLPOOL 6th Sense AWZ233 (6 kg) \$1049

WHIRLPOOL AWZ220 (5 kg) \$899

HOOVER 5030DD **▶ BEST BUY** \$440

WESTINGHOUSE LD503A **▶ BEST BUY** \$440

More than 7 kg

New MAYTAG Atlantis MDE6400 (9 kg)* \$1599

New MAYTAG Neptune MDE7550 (9 kg)* \$1799

* Requires 20 amp mains supply, so needs installation by an electrician unless your laundry already has a 20 amp outlet.

HIGH AND DRY

Most dryers generate a lot of hot, moist air, which ideally you want to direct out of your home so you don't get condensation forming. That might be simple if you have a laundry where you can duct the air straight out of a window, or if it has an extractor fan. If not, you could end up having to knock a hole in a wall. In either case it's important to know the details of your ducting plan when you buy the machine.

Many dryers are available with a ducting kit (often as an optional extra), but you need to check if they're compatible with how you intend to duct. In the shop, ask the salesperson:

- Can this dryer be ducted?
- Will the ducting kit be suitable for use with the installation you have in mind — via a window or wall, and the type of wall? The kit may not be suitable for all situations.

Hanging the dryer on the wall or stacking it on top of your washing machine can be a useful option, particularly if you're short of space. But not all dryers can be mounted like this, so check the model before you buy — many of the biggest ones are too heavy.

Also consider whether your wall is suitable to hang a dryer on: a flimsy wall won't be able to support any significant weight. And make sure you buy the fastenings and screws that match your type of wall for securing the brackets, otherwise you risk the whole thing falling down.

How reliable have subscribers found them?

Dryers are generally very reliable. When CHOICE surveyed subscribers last year, they topped the list as the most reliable appliance we asked about, with only 5% on average having needed repair in the previous 12 months.

Three brands dominate the dryer market in Australia, and there's not much to choose between them for reliability; unfortunately we didn't get enough responses to report on the reliability of other brands.

All the dryers reported on were bought in or after 1996, and the number in brackets is the number of people who gave us information about that brand.

PERCENTAGE NOT NEEDING REPAIR

Differences of 2% or more are meaningful

Hoover (1390)	97
Fisher & Paykel (2666)	96
Simpson (1272)	93
All clothes dryers (4807)	95



For people with a disability

An occupational therapist from the Independent Living Centre, NSW, assessed the dryers' suitability for people with certain disabilities:

- If for any reason you'd have difficulty reaching into the back of the drum to clean the filter, the **SIMPSONs** aren't suitable.

■ In general, if you're in a wheelchair or have back pain or upper limb dysfunction, raising a dryer off the floor will improve its ease of use. If it can't be wall-mounted or stacked on top of your washing machine, it could sit on a bench at an appropriate height. The **BOSCH** and the **MIELE** are good in that they have their lint filter as well as their controls at the front, but their doors require some strength to open. The **WHIRLPOOL 6th Sense** also has its controls and lint filter at the front and the door is easy to open, but reaching to the back of the larger drum could be difficult.

■ For those with a vision impairment, the **SIMPSON Autosensing Eziset 39S550L, 39S555L and 39S555LVK** rated best due to their well-contrasted pushbutton controls with auditory feedback.

■ For those with a cognitive impairment the above three **SIMPSON** models, the **WHIRLPOOL 6th Sense** and the **MIELE** all have the possibility of a one-touch start, while all the other **SIMPSON** models have only one dial to select. The **FISHER & PAYKEL AD55** and **AD39** have clear labelling and simple controls.

Profiles of new models

New models in the *What to buy* list are profiled here. The other recommended models were reported on in CHOICE, May 2004, or go to www.choiceextra.com.au and look under 'clothes dryers' in the index. 



5 KG TO 7 KG

MIELE T220

Price: \$1699

Capacity: 5 kg

Good points

- Best drying performance of all the models in the table (page 44).
- Fast drying time.
- Very easy to use.
- 2.5 stars (out of a maximum of six) for energy efficiency, which is comparatively good for a dryer.
- Lots of features, such as eight sensor drying settings; 'handcare', woollens and 'smoothing' programs; anti-crease phase at the end of the cycle; and an internal light.

Bad points

- Can't be wall-mounted.
- Expensive to buy.



WHIRLPOOL 6TH SENSE AWZ233

Price: \$1049

Capacity: 6 kg

Good points

- Second-best drying performance of all the models in the table.
- Very easy to use.
- Eight drying programs.
- Lint filter 'cleaning required' light.
- Anti-crease phase at the end of the cycle.

Bad points

- Can't be wall-mounted.
- Comparatively expensive both to buy and run.



MORE THAN 7 KG

MAYTAG ATLANTIS MDE6400

Price: \$1599

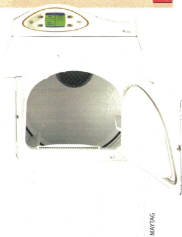
Capacity: 9 kg

Good points

- Equal best dryer overall.
- Fast drying time.
- Very easy to use.
- Internal drying rack is available as an optional extra.
- Selectable anti-crease phase at the end of the cycle.

Bad points

- Requires a 20 amp mains supply, so will need to be connected by an electrician unless your laundry already has a 20 amp outlet.
- Can't be wall-mounted, and you can't put it on top of your washing machine.
- Expensive both to buy and run.



MAYTAG NEPTUNE MDE7550

Price: \$1799

Capacity: 9 kg

Good points

- Equal best dryer overall.
- Fast drying time.
- Very easy to use.
- Five sensor drying settings.
- Internal drying rack is available as an optional extra.
- Novel touch-screen control panel as well as conventional electronic pushbuttons.
- Selectable anti-crease phase at the end of the cycle.

Bad points

- Requires a 20 amp mains supply, so will need to be connected by an electrician unless your laundry already has a 20 amp outlet.
- Can't be wall-mounted, and you can't put it on top of your washing machine.
- Expensive both to buy and run.

Return of a hazard

It's not unknown for young children — and pets — to climb into a dryer. If it's partway through a cycle and the door is then closed again (by the child themselves or from the outside), and the dryer starts immediately, that's bad news.

We thought this problem had gone away years ago after our tests first came across it, but on checking this time we found it was back. Several **SIMPSON Eziset** dryers — the 39P350L, 39P450L, 39S455L, 39S500L and 39S500LVK — automatically restart when the door's closed if a cycle is interrupted.

We'd like to see Electrolux, manufacturer of the **SIMPSONs**, fix this up fast by including another step to restart the dryer after the door is closed.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

As noted earlier, all the dryers will get your clothes dry; some will just do it faster and/or more energy efficiently than others. If you find any of the dryers assessed here that has the features you want for a good price, you'll probably be happy with it.

Brand / model (in rank order)

LESS THAN 5 KG

FISHER & PAYKEL ED56

FISHER & PAYKEL AD39

FISHER & PAYKEL AD55

SIMPSON Eziset 39P450L

SIMPSON Eziset 39S455L

WESTINGHOUSE LD352A

WESTINGHOUSE LD353A

SIMPSON Eziset 39P350L

HOOVER 3525DD

HOOVER 3530DD

5 KG TO 7 KG

MIELE T220

WHIRLPOOL 6th Sense AW223Z

WHIRLPOOL AW2220

KLEENMAID KED 300

BOSCH ClassiXX WTA3003AU

HOOVER 5030DD

WESTINGHOUSE LD503A

WESTINGHOUSE LD504A

WESTINGHOUSE LD505A

SIMPSON Autosensing Eziset 39S550L

SIMPSON Autosensing Eziset 39S555L

SIMPSON Autosensing Eziset 39S555LVK (A)

SIMPSON Eziset 39S550L

SIMPSON Eziset 39S550LVK (A)

HOOVER 5050EDD

HOOVER 5040ED

LARGER THAN 7 KG

MAYTAG Atlantis MDE6400

MAYTAG Neptune MDE7550

PERFORMANCE						6 FEATURES		
1 Overall score (%)	2 Ease of use score (%)	3 Drying performance score (%)	4 Drying time score (%)	4 Cycle time (minutes)	5 Energy rating stars	Controls	Wall-mountable / stackable	Drying
63	83	57	59	147	2	Sensor (B)	✓ (C) / ns	Internal
61	82	53	59	117	1.5	Timer	✓ (C) / ns	Internal
61	85	51	58	152	1	Timer	✓ (C) / ns	Internal
60	72	51	63	131	1	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	Internal
60	72	51	63	131	1	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	Internal
59	82	48	59	116	1	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	External
59	82	48	59	116	1	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	External
56	72	45	58	118	1	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	Internal
55	82	48	48	150	1	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	External
55	82	48	48	150	1	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	External
69	85	60	71	111	2.5	Sensor & timer	- / ✓	
68	85	59	68	150	2	Sensor & timer	- / ✓	
68	85	55	72	108	1.5	Timer	- / ✓	
65	83	54	68	126	1.5	Timer	✓ (D) / ns	Internal
64	83	53	66	134	1.5	Timer	- / ✓	
62	82	51	62	150	1	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	External
62	82	51	62	150	1	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	External
62	82	53	62	150	1.5	Sensor & timer	✓ (C) / ✓	External
62	82	54	61	155	1.5	Sensor & timer	✓ (C) / ✓	External
61	73	55	62	154	1.5	Sensor	✓ (C) / ✓	Internal
61	73	55	62	154	1.5	Sensor	✓ (C) / ✓	Internal
61	73	55	62	154	1.5	Sensor	✓ (C) / ✓	Internal
60	73	51	63	146	1.5	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	Internal
60	73	51	63	146	1.5	Timer	✓ (C) / ✓	Internal
60	73	54	60	160	1.5	Sensor & timer	✓ (C) / ✓	External
59	73	52	60	162	1.5	Sensor & timer	✓ (C) / ✓	External
71	83	54	81	117	1.5	Sensor & timer	- / -	Internal
71	85	53	82	114	1.5	Sensor & timer	- / -	Internal

* Newly assessed models.

* This is the basic warranty; some manufacturers guarantee some parts for longer. Conditions may apply; check with the retailer.

** Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in January 2005. You can get better prices than these by shopping around.

na Not applicable — machines with their air exhaust at the front can't have ducting attached.

ns Not stated

(A) VK in these model numbers means the dryer is supplied with a 'vent kit' to let you duct the hot air away. Note this costs the same as the same model (39S555L and 39S550L respectively) without the kit.

(B) Plus a single setting of one hour for the timer.

(C) Fitting supplied.

(D) Fitting optional for an extra cost.

(E) Plus eight sensor settings, 'handcare', woollens and 'smoothing' cycles.

(F) Normal, gentle and rapid plus eight sensor programs including 'airing' (cold).

(G) Plus delicate.

(H) Plus extra-low and five sensor settings.

(I) Or night or left.

(K) Or through the front panel.

(L) Can be switched to left or base on request.

(M) Filter not removable: you just clean the lint off it.

(N) Automatic reset.

(P) Resettable; if it's not resettable you'll need a service call before you can use the dryer again.

(Q) Extended warranty for \$95, to a total of five years.

(R) \$1399 if purchased with matching washing machine.

1 Overall score

This is a combination of the following scores:

■ Ease of use: 20%

■ Drying performance: 40%

■ Drying time: 40%

We didn't test all the dryers in the table. To get an energy rating label and be allowed on the Australian market, dryers not only have their energy efficiency measured but have to achieve a certain level of drying performance. Our drying performance score is therefore calculated from information on the energy rating label. Our previous testing of many dryers' performance and energy use has shown the energy label to be accurate.

Drying time is also available from model specifications without testing.

We assessed and scored the ease of use of several models. Where a model we didn't assess has the same controls and filter as the model we tested, we can give it the same score for ease of use.

Putting the overall score together in this way allows us to bring you scores and information for far more models than we can test for any one CHOICE report, and we're confident the results as reported reflect reality.

2 Ease of use score

This reflects the ease of using the controls, and of accessing and cleaning the filter.

						SPECIFICATIONS				COSTS		
Reverse tumbling	Temperature settings	Air exhaust location	Ducting kit	Filter location	Overheat protection	Capacity (kg)	Dimensions (W x H x D, cm)	Origin	Warranty (years)*	Manufacturer / distributor	7 Running costs (\$ / 10 years)	Price (\$)**
✓	C, M, H	Rear	(D)	Inside front	(N)	4.5	57 x 79 x 56	NZ	2	Fisher & Paykel	961	459
✓	M, H	Front	na	On door	(N)	3.5	57 x 79 x 44	NZ	2	Fisher & Paykel	732	329
✓	M, H	Rear	(D)	Inside front	(N)	4.5	57 x 79 x 56	NZ	2	Fisher & Paykel	976	419
✓	C, M, H	Rear	(D)	Rear	✓ (P)	4.5	60 x 72 x 54	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	877	384
✓	C, M, H	Rear	(D)	Rear	✓ (P)	4.5	60 x 72 x 54	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	877	407
✓	M, H	Front	na	On door	✓	3.5	57 x 78 x 56	Australia	2 (Q)	Electrolux	720	362
✓	M, H	Front	na	On door	✓	3.5	57 x 78 x 56	Australia	2 (Q)	Electrolux	720	384
✓	C, M, H	Rear	(D)	Rear	✓ (P)	3.5	60 x 72 x 46	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	763	362
✓	M, H	Front	na	On door	✓	3.5	57 x 78 x 46	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	720	362
✓	M, H	Front	na	On door	✓	3.5	57 x 78 x 46	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	720	384
✓	C, H (E)	Rear (J)	(D)	Inside front	✓	5.0	60 x 85 x 58	Germany	2	Miele	891	1699 (R)
✓	(F)	Rear	(C)	Inside front	✓ (N)	6.0	60 x 85 x 58	France	2	Whirlpool	1108	1049
✓	M, H	Rear	(C)	Inside front	✓ (N)	5.0	60 x 85 x 58	France	2	Whirlpool	905	899
✓	M, H	Front	na	Inside front (M)	✓ (P)	5.0	60 x 85 x 53	UK	5	Kleenmaid	1023	949
✓	M, H	Rear (K)	(C)	Inside front	✓ (P)	5.0	60 x 85 x 53	England	2	Robert Bosch	936	899
✓	M, H	Front	na	On door	✓	5.0	57 x 78 x 57	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	972	440
✓	M, H	Front	na	On door	✓	5.0	57 x 78 x 56	Australia	2 (Q)	Electrolux	972	440
✓	H	Front	na	On door	✓	5.0	57 x 78 x 58	Australia	2 (Q)	Electrolux	1030	473
✓	C, M, H	Front	na	On door	✓	5.0	57 x 78 x 58	Australia	2 (Q)	Electrolux	1004	528
✓	H	Rear	(D)	Rear	✓ (P)	5.0	60 x 72 x 54	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	987	473
✓	C, M, H	Rear	(D)	Rear	✓ (P)	5.0	60 x 72 x 54	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	987	528
✓	C, M, H	Rear	(C)	Rear	✓ (P)	5.0	60 x 72 x 54	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	987	528
✓	M, H	Rear	(D)	Rear	✓ (P)	5.0	60 x 72 x 54	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	960	473
✓	M, H	Rear	(C)	Rear	✓ (P)	5.0	60 x 72 x 54	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	960	473
✓	C, M, H	Front	na	On door	✓	5.0	57 x 78 x 57	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	1004	528
✓	M, H	Front	na	On door	✓	5.0	57 x 78 x 57	Australia	1 (Q)	Electrolux	1038	495
	C, M, H (G)	Rear (L)	(D)	Inside front	✓	9.0	69 x 110 x 70	USA	5	Maytag	1809	1599
	C, M, H (H)	Rear (L)	(D)	Inside front	✓	9.0	69 x 108 x 72	USA	5	Maytag	1830	1799

3 Drying performance score

An assessment of how energy-efficient the dryers are at reaching a specified level of dryness, also taking into consideration the capacity of the machine. (6% residual moisture is regarded as the desirable level for a dryer to achieve, in order not to overdry clothes.)

4 Drying time score/cycle time

■ The score is based on the time taken to dry 1 kg of clothes to a specific level of dryness.
 ■ The cycle time is the total time to dry a full load.

5 Energy rating stars

The star rating on the energy label is a measure of how energy-efficient the

dryer is, and takes into account the capacity of the machine. The more stars the better, with a maximum of six.

6 Features

■ **Controls:** On auto-sensing dryers, the dryer automatically switches off when a sensor detects the load has reached a preset dryness level. Some auto-sensing dryers have a manual timer as well.
 ■ **Wall-mountable/stackable:** See *High and dry*, page 42, for more on hanging your dryer on the wall or putting it on top of your washing machine.
 ■ **Drying rack:** An external rack in front of the dryer lets you dry extra items using the warm exhaust air (you can't do this if you install a ducting kit). An internal rack can be mounted inside

some models and is useful for items that are best dried without tumbling (like woollens, delicates, shoes and hats).

■ **Reverse tumbling:** The drum reverses the direction of rotation at regular intervals to minimise tangling while evenly drying your clothes.

■ **Temperature settings:**

C: Cold.

M: Medium.

H: Hot.

Some auto-sensing dryers don't have manual temperature selection at all.

■ **Air exhaust location/ducting kit:** See *High and dry* for more on ducting the hot, moist air out of your laundry. Generally machines that vent the exhaust air at the front can't be ducted.

■ **Filter location:** If the filter is at the front of the machine (rather than inside the drum at the rear) it's easier to clean after every load — especially if the dryer's mounted on a wall.

■ **Overheat protection:** When the temperature of the dryer goes over a preset limit, this cuts off the power and reduces the risk of fire caused by overheating. It's a good safety feature, but if it's not resettable you'll need a service call if it trips.

7 Running costs

This is based on drying a full load about three times a week (150 loads a year) for 10 years. It's calculated based on an energy cost of 15 cents per kWh.

Internet phone calls

Using the internet to make cheap phone calls.

Did you know you can use your broadband internet connection and computer to make voice calls to family and friends anywhere around the world? And it's only a fraction of the cost of standard international and long-distance phone calls. The process is called **Voice over Internet Protocol** or **Voice over IP (VoIP)**. It involves sending voice traffic over the internet instead of via a standard telephone network.

How VoIP works

Standard telephone calls connect you and the recipient using a dedicated line. The connection stays open until you close it. Computer data travels quite differently. Fragments of a data message, known as packets, travel via many different routes to reach their destination. VoIP services send voice traffic over the internet in the same way as computer data travels. Unlike a standard telephone call, there's no continuous connection between the two end points. See the diagrams, right.

The advantage of sending voice traffic as packets is that it's much cheaper.

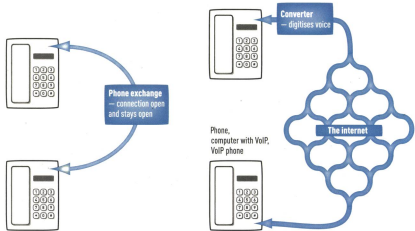
To use VoIP, you need a broadband connection that sends (uploads) and receives (downloads) data at a speed of at least 128 kilobits per second (kbps). The faster the connection, the better the sound quality of the calls.

There are several ways you can make VoIP calls. Depending on the service you choose, you may pay a monthly fee or buy a set amount of call credits. However, calls to other users on the same network are usually free.

Computer to computer

This is the easiest (and cheapest) way to use VoIP. All you need is VoIP software, a microphone, speakers or headphones connected to your computer, a soundcard and, of course, an internet connection.

You can use your computer to make free calls to other members of the same VoIP service, even if you're calling long-distance. You talk to each other using your computers' speakers and microphones. Free services such as **YAHOO! MESSENGER** and **WINDOWS MESSENGER** only allow you to call people who are logged into the service at the same time as you — you can't leave messages or phone friends who aren't logged in. In addition, people using another VoIP service or those with a regular phone won't be able to contact you unless you also keep your standard telephone number connected. Services with a monthly fee usually offer these kinds of features.



Traditional telephone calls connect using a dedicated line.

VoIP data travels in both directions and via multiple routes — less bandwidth and lower cost.

Computer to phone

Some VoIP software can call regular phone numbers, although most services charge a fee for calls to non-members, and you may not be able to receive regular phone calls on your computer.

Phone to phone

More advanced VoIP services can completely replace your regular telephone service. You have a regular phone number so people can call you no matter what phone service they use. For these services you need either an IP phone or an ATA, which can cost several hundred dollars and may only work with a single provider.

- An ATA is an analogue-to-digital converter, which digitises your voice when you speak into a regular phone. One end connects to your telephone and the other to your internet connection. You may also need to install software.
- An IP phone looks like a standard phone with a handset, cradle and buttons, but it uses an Ethernet connector instead of a phone connector. It plugs directly into a network router and because it has all the necessary equipment on board, there's no need for additional software.

With either an ATA or IP phone you talk into the phone handset just as you would using a regular phone.

For more on VoIP, see *Computer CHOICE*, Jan/Feb 2005 — call 1800 069 552 toll-free to subscribe. ■

COMPANIES THAT OFFER VOIP

- www.broadbandphone.com.au.
- www.engin.com.au.
- www.freshetel.net.au (Firefly).
- www.optus.com.au.
- www.skype.com.
- www.swiftbroadband.com.au.
- www.telstra.com.

EMERGENCY CALLS

VoIP service providers don't always support calls to the emergency 000 number. Read your service provider's terms and conditions carefully. It may be a good idea to keep your standard telephone line active for emergency calls.

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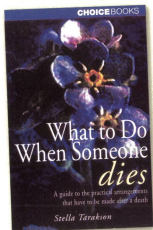
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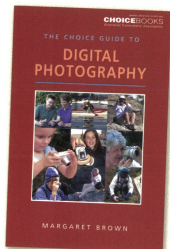
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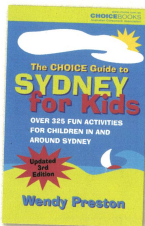
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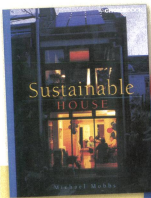


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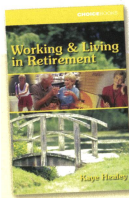


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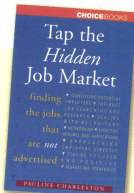
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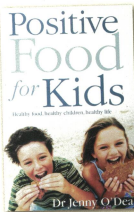
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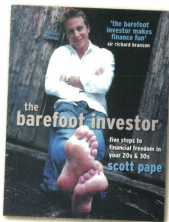


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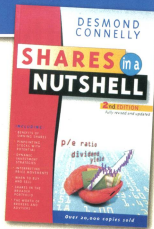


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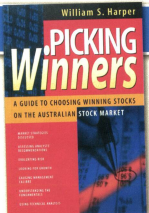


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recalls&bans

Nowadays there are so many product recalls we may not be able to print all of them in CHOICE. For comprehensive recall information go to the Federal Treasury website: www.recalls.gov.au. If you don't have web access, call the Consumer Safety Unit on (02) 6263 2747.

Companies often rent 1800 numbers for a couple of months after a recall is announced. If the number given is no longer operating, phone the manufacturer or retailer direct.

FOOD: Parmalat has recalled **Breaka chocolate flavoured milk UHT longlife**, 250 mL and 1 L, with a use-by date of 05/08/2005, and 6 x 250 mL with use-by dates of 14/07/2005 and 05/08/2005; and **Pauls Thomas and Friends chocolate flavoured milk UHT longlife**, 6 x 160 mL, with a use-by date of 05/08/2005.

The problem: It may spoil before reaching the use-by date.

What to do: Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or call 1800 676 961 for more information.

FOOD: Coles and Bi-Lo supermarkets have recalled **Coles and Bi-Lo Thin BBQ Sausages**, random weights and assorted pack sizes, with best-before dates between 31.12.04 and 11.1.05 inclusive, and sold in Coles, Bi-Lo and Pick N' Pay stores in Queensland and the Northern Rivers area of NSW.

The problem: They may contain pieces of plastic.

What to do: If you froze them for later use, don't eat them. Check your freezer for any affected products, and return them to your nearest store for a refund, or call 1800 061 562 for more information.

FOOD: Glass Jar Pasta Company has recalled the following **Glass Jar Pasta Company hampers**, sold through Big W, Target and Target Country stores between October 2004 and January 2005. (See CHOICE, March 2005, for further recalls similar to these.)

Big W: Festive Flair hamper (4897002), Three Bottle Basket hamper (4897019), Decadent Delight hamper (4897040), Shining Star hamper (4897064), Christmas Cheer hamper (4897415), Festive Favourites hamper (4897422), Seasonal Highlights hamper (4897552), Festive Spirit hamper (4897569), Festive Fun hamper (4897583), Christmas Travels hamper (4897576), Holiday Heaven hamper (4897590), Grand Gourmet hamper (4897606), Everyday Café Coffee for Two gift basket (4885764), Everyday Café Hot Chocolate for two gift basket (4885764).

Target: Seasonal Splendour hamper (35209836), Festive Fun Picnic hamper (35211419), Outdoor Celebration hamper (35210023).

The problem: The hampers may contain larvae of foreign insects. The products in the hamper are not affected.

What to do: Place the hamper in a sealed plastic bag and return it to the place of purchase for a refund. Alternatively, to treat the hamper yourself, place it in a sealed bag in a freezer for two weeks, or burn the basket in a safe manner, observing local fire restrictions and regulations. For more information on hampers bought at Big W call 1800 251 311, or for a Target hamper call 1800 814 788.

LUGGAGE STRAPS: Pro-Kit has recalled the **Ratchet Tie Down set**.

The problem: It doesn't comply with the product safety standard for elastic luggage straps because it doesn't carry a warning label regarding use and risk of possible eye or facial injury.

What to do: Pro-Kit has arranged to have Direct Freight collect the product free from consumers. Call 1800 602 655 for more information.

CAR: Toyota Motor Corporation Australia has recalled some **Toyota Camry and Avalon models**, within the following vehicle identification number (VIN) ranges and production periods:

■ Camry ACV36: VDS 53BK36, VIS 0X000001-0X052392, 30/07/2002-10/06/2004.

■ Camry MCV36: VDS 53XK36, VIS 0X270001-0X296718, 30/07/2002-10/06/2004.

■ Avalon MKIII-MCX10: VDS 53XH10, VIS 06032299-06040046, 8/09/2003-10/06/2004.

The problem: An assembly error may result in the fuel tank cracking, and fuel leakage may occur.

What to do: Contact your nearest Toyota dealer to arrange for rectification to be carried out free of charge. For more information call 1800 643 242 weekdays 8 am to 4:30 pm EST.

CAR: Toyota has recalled **Toyota Avenis Verso**, model ACM20, produced from January 30, 2001, to April 11, 2002, within the following VIN range:

WMI	VDS	VIS
JTE	GH23B#	00001014 to 00009101
		05000004 to 05002652

The problem: Under certain operating and environmental conditions, a fuel leak may develop.

What to do: Owners should have been contacted by letter, or contact your nearest Toyota dealer to arrange rectification. For more information call 1800 643 242, Monday to Friday 8 am to 4:30 pm EST.

CAR: Toyota has recalled **Lexus LS430** models.

The problem: The fuel pump may seize.

What to do: Owners should have been contacted by letter, or contact your nearest Toyota dealer to arrange repair.

CAR: Vehicle Distributors Australia has recalled **Renault Xyo Master** models.

The problem: The steering wheel mounting nut may lack tightening pressure, which could affect control of the vehicle.

What to do: Contact your nearest Renault dealer to arrange repair.

MOTORCYCLE: Ducati has recalled **Multistrada 1000 motorcycles**, 2004 model.

The problem: The oil cooler delivery hoses need replacing, as a fracture may cause them to leak oil that may affect the rear tyre and cause loss of control.

What to do: Contact your nearest Ducati dealer to arrange repair.

MOTORCYCLE: Harley Davidson has recalled **Harley Davidson voltage regulator cover** for MY Dyna Glide motorcycles, 2004 models FXD, FXDI, FXDXI and 2005 models FXDC and FXDCI.

The problem: The rear tip of the front fender could become locked in the voltage regulator cover installed as an accessory item. This would limit front suspension travel and steering.

What to do: Contact your nearest Harley Davidson dealer to arrange repair.

MOTORCYCLE: Triumph Motorcycles has recalled **Triumph motorcycle Rocket III** model.

The problem: A possible oil leak in the pinion oil seal may lead to loss of oil and the rear wheel seizing.

What to do: Contact your nearest Triumph dealer to arrange repair.

LIGHT FITTINGS: Eglo Lighting has recalled **Eglo wall or ceiling-mounted fittings**, with an E27 incandescent lamp globe holder for a standard-size globe with a screw-in type base.

The problem: It breaches an Australian standard for electrical installation.

What to do: Call (08) 8277 1166 to have the problem rectified.

CHRISTMAS TREE CANDLES: Souli Pattinson Chemist has recalled **Christmas tree candles**, product code 976695.

The problem: The candles shed branches as they burn, posing a fire hazard.

What to do: Don't use them; return them to the place of purchase for a refund.

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index

HOW TO USE THIS INDEX

Bold type indicates a test, survey or trial report, normal type indicates other articles.

* indicates an update of a previous report, additions or corrections to reports, small follow-up items, letters or recalls. For space reasons, the index generally doesn't include Choice Cuts and other small pieces.

A Acne treatments Aug, Jan/Feb*
 Advertising drugs Jun
 Air conditioners, split-system,
 including inverters Oct
 Antivirus software Jul
 Appliance reliability Aug

B Baby
 food Jul
 monitors Aug
 Baked beans May
 Band-aids Jul
 Barbecues, gas, trolley/portable Dec
 Batteries, rechargeable, AA Mar
 Breakfast cereals Mar
 Breakfasts, quick Sep
 Butter and spreads Jan/Feb

C Camcorders, digital Jan/Feb
 Cameras
 digital Oct, Dec*, Apr
 paper costs, printing photos Oct
 Cars

ANCAP crash tests Oct
 hybrid petrol/electric cars Apr
 key replacement costs Sep
 lemon laws Sep
 reader reviews Jul, Aug, Mar, Apr
 repair costs May, Jul*
 used car safety Dec
 waterless car cleaners Mar
 Cashew nuts Mar
 Cereals, breakfast Mar
 Champagne and sparkling wine Dec
 Child/baby concerns

baby food Jul
 baby monitors Aug
 cots Jan/Feb
 lunches and snacks Jan/Feb
 safety gates May
 tipping stove Nov, Jan/Feb*

Cleaners
 car, waterless Mar
 mitts Apr
 multipurpose Oct
 steam Apr
 Clothes dryers May, Dec*, Apr
 Cockroach killers Dec
 Coffee

espresso machines Aug
 grinders Aug
 pre-ground for plungers Jul
 Column heaters Jun
 Cooktops, buying guide Oct
 Cordless drills, cheap Apr
 Cordless phones May, Apr

Corporate social responsibility,
 GSM mobile phones Jun
 Cots Jan/Feb

Digital camcorders Jan/Feb
 Digital cameras Oct, Dec*, Apr
 Dishwashers Jul, Jan/Feb
 Doors, security screen Mar
 Drills, cheap cordless Apr
 Drugs, advertising Jun
 Dryers, clothes May, Dec*, Apr
 DVD and hard disk recorders Jun
 DVD players, portable May

Eggs Sep
 Electric shavers Nov, Jan/Feb*
 Electric toothbrushes Sep
 Electricity, costs and supply Mar
 Energy labelling Sep
 Espresso machines Aug
 Ethical manufacture, GSM
 mobile phones Jun

Fish, misnaming Jul
 Flooring guide, timber Dec
 Food
 baby food Jul
 baked beans May
 breakfast cereals Mar
 breakfasts, quick Sep
 butter and spreads Jan/Feb
 children's lunches and snacks Jan/Feb

eggs Sep
 fish, misnaming Jul
 folate Nov
 frozen meals May
 health claims Jun
 juice bars Dec
 labelling, quality descriptors Nov
 nuts, cashews and mixed Dec
 olive oil Aug
 olives Jul
 organic processed foods Oct
 spreads and butter Jan/Feb
 storage, disposable Jan/Feb
 trans fat Apr
 Folate, eating enough Nov
 Fridges

200–299 L Jun
 energy-efficient, mixed sizes Nov
 Frozen meals May
 Frypans, non-stick Nov

Glamour photography Apr
 Greywater, reusing Nov, Mar*
 Groceries, buying online May
 Gyms Jul

Hard disk and DVD recorders Jun
 Health
 acne treatments Aug
 claims on food labels Jun
 drug advertising Jun
 hospital insurance Sep
 magnet therapy Sep
 Medicare safety net May
 mobile phones, EMR Jun, Sep*
 pedometers Oct, Dec*

Headers
 column Jun
 outdoor, gas Mar
 Home theatre systems Dec
 Home warranty insurance Aug
 Hospital insurance Sep
 Hybrid (petrol/electric) cars Apr

Index, four-year Jun
 Indoor paint Dec
 home warranty Aug
 hospital Sep
 travel Dec

Internet/phone/TV packages Aug
 Internet, wireless Nov
 Irons, steam stations Jul

Juice bars Dec

Knives, 20 cm cook's Jun

Labelling
 energy food Sep
 health claims on food Nov
 Lawnmowers, battery and
 electric Jun
 Lemon laws (cars) Nov
 Sep

Magnet therapy Sep
 Manufacture, ethical, GSM
 mobile phones Jun
 Mattresses, buying guide Oct
 Meals, frozen May
 Medicare safety net May
 Mitts, cleaning Apr
 Dec
 Mixed nuts
 Mobile phones
 GSM Jun, Jan/Feb
 plans May
 safety and EMR Jun, Sep*
 Money — see Financial
 Monitors, baby Aug
 Multipurpose cleaners Oct

Non-stick frypans Nov
 Nuts, cashews and mixed Dec

Olive oil Aug
 Olives Jul
 Online shopping May
 Organic processed foods Oct
 Outdoor gas heaters Mar
 Ovens, wall, electric
 multifunction Jul

Paint, indoor Dec
 Paper costs, printing photos Oct
 Pay TV Mar
 Pedometers Oct, Dec*
 Pharmaceuticals, advertising Jun
 Pharmacies, advice given Sep
 Phone/internet/TV packages Aug
 Phones

cordless May, Apr
 mobile — see Mobile phones
 phoning home from overseas Sep, Dec*

VoIP calls Apr
 Photography, glamour Apr
 Plunger coffee, pre-ground Jul
 Pool fences Sep
 Portable DVD players May

Rainwater tanks Nov, Mar*
 Rechargeable batteries, AA Mar
 Refrigerators — see Fridges Aug
 Reliability, appliances Mar
 Rice cookers

Safety gates for toddlers May
 Sales tactics, supermarkets May

Security screen doors Mar
 Shavers, electric Nov, Jan/Feb*
 Shopping online May
 Snacks for children Jan/Feb
 Sparkling wine and champagne Dec
 Spreads and butter Jan/Feb
 Steam cleaners Apr
 Steam stations Jul
 Storage, food, disposable Jan/Feb
 Stove, tipping Nov, Jan/Feb*
 Supermarket sales tactics May

Telephones — see Phones

Television
 pay TV Mar
 topping TVs Oct, Mar*
 widescreen, 76 cm Oct, Jan/Feb*
 Timber flooring guide Dec
 Toothbrushes, electric Sep
 Toothpaste, whitening Jan/Feb
 Trans fat Apr
 Travel insurance Dec
 TV/phone/internet packages Aug

Vacuum cleaners Aug
 Video equipment
 DVD and hard disk recorders Jun
 DVD players, portable May
 home theatre systems Dec
 VoIP phone calls Apr

Washer-dryers Mar, Apr*
 Washing machines Sep, Oct*,
 Jan/Feb*

Water
 greywater, reusing Nov, Mar*
 rainwater tanks Nov, Mar*
 supply May
 Waterless car cleaners Mar
 Whitening toothpaste Jan/Feb
 Wine, sparkling and champagne Dec
 Wireless internet Nov

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coming.

If you have any examples you think deserve to be on this
page, send them to *The Hard Word*, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road,
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originals.

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